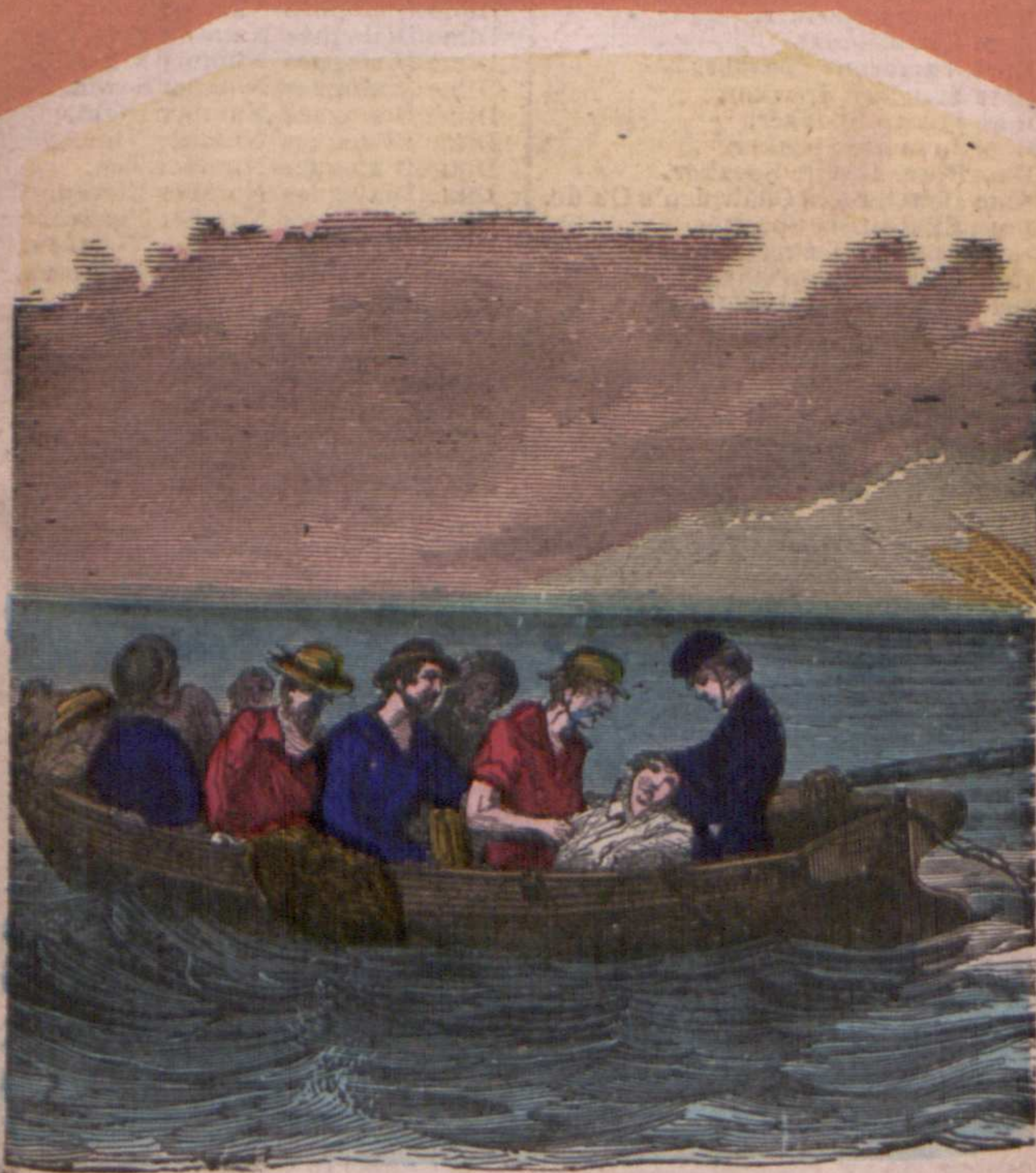


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THE
PRIVATEER'S CRUISE,
AND THE
BRIDE OF POMFRET HALL.

A SEA TALE OF '76.

BY HARRY CAVENDISH,
AUTHOR OF DIME NOVEL No. 398, "BLACK ROVER."

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
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THE PRIVATEER'S CRUISE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WRECK.

THE parting word had been said, the last look had been taken, and my traps had all been snugly stowed away in the narrow room which, for some years, was to be my home. I stood by the starboard railing, gazing back on the dear city I was leaving, and, despite the stoicism I had affected when bidding farewell to my friends, I could not now prevent a starting tear. Nor did my messmates seem in a more sportive mood; for they could be seen, some in the rigging and some leaning over the ship's side, looking back on the well-known landmarks of the town with a seriousness in their aspect which betokened the thoughts passing through the heart. Yes! we were about leaving the scenes of our boyhood, to enter on a new and untried life — and who knew if any of us would ever return again to our homes? The chances of war are at all times dreadful, but in our case they were terribly increased by the flag under which we sailed. Who could tell whether the officers of the revolted colonies might not be considered as traitors as well as rebels? Who knew but that the very first enemy we should meet would either sink or hang us at the yard-arm? And yet, firm in the righteousness of our cause, and confiding in the God of battles, there was not one of our number who, having put his hand to the plow, wished to turn back. Sink or swim — live or die — we were resigned to either destiny.

Evening was closing fast around the scene, and, even as I gazed, the town melted into gloom, Copp's Hill alone standing up in solemn majesty over the shadowy city. The distant hum of the town died fainter and fainter on the darkness, the evening breeze came up fresher across the waters, the song of the fisherman and the dip of passing oars ceased, and, one by one, the white sails of the ships around us faded away, at first seeming like faint clouds, but finally losing themselves altogether in the darkness. All around was still. The low monotonous ground-swell heaving under our counter, and rippling faintly as it went, alone broke the witching silence. Not a breath of air was stirring. The boatswain's whistle was hushed, the whisper had died away, no footfall rose upon the stillness, but over shore and sea, earth and sky, man and inanimate creation, the same deep silence hung.

Gradually, however, the scene changed. Lights began to flash along the town and from the ships in port, and, in a few moments, the harbor was alive with a long line of effulgence. A half-subdued halo now hung over the city. The effect produced was like that of

magic. Here a ship lay almost buried in gloom — there one was thrown out in bold relief by the lights — now a tall warehouse rose shadowy into the sky, and now one might be seen almost as distinctly as at noonday. The lights streaming from the cabin windows and dancing along the bay, the swell tinged on its crest with silver, but dark as night below, and the far-off sails gleaming like shadowy specters through the uncertain light, added double effect to the picture. And when the stars came out, one by one, blinking high up in the firmament, and the wind began to sigh across the bay and wail sadly through our rigging, the weird-like character of the prospect grew beyond description. Hour after hour passed away, and we still continued gazing on the scene as if under the influence of some magician's spell; but, at length, exhausted nature gave way, and one after another went below, leaving only those on deck whose duty required their presence. For myself, though I sought my hammock, a succession of wild indistinct dreams haunted me throughout the livelong night.

A pleasant breeze was singing through the rigging as I mounted the gangway at dawn, and the tide having already made, I knew no time would be lost in getting under weigh. Directly the captain made his appearance, and, after a few whispered words, the pilot issued his orders. In an instant all was bustle. The boatswain's whistle, calling all hands to their duty, was heard shrieking through the ship, and then came the quick, hurried tread of many feet, as the men swarmed to their stations. The anchor was soon hove short; the sails were loosed; the topsails, top-gallant-sails and royals were sheeted home and hoisted; the head yards were braced aback and the after yards filled away; a sheer was made with the helm; the anchor was tripped; the jib was hoisted; and as she paid beautifully off, the foretop-sail was filled merrily away, and the spanker hauled out. Then the yards were trimmed, the anchor catted, and with a light breeze urging us on, we stood gallantly down the bay. As we increased our distance from the town, the wind gradually freshened. One after another of the green islands around us faded astern; the heights of Nahant opened ahead, glanced by and frowned in our wake; and before the sun had been many hours on his course, we were rolling our yard-arms in a stiff breeze, leagues to sea. Before sundown the distant coast had vanished from sight.

My messmates had already gathered around the table in the long narrow room which was appropriated to the midshipmen, when I dove down the hatchway after the watch had been set. They were as jovial a set as I had ever seen, and, although our acquaintance was but of twenty-four hours standing, we all felt perfectly at home with each other; and as the salt beef was pushed from hand to hand, and the jug passed merrily around, the mutual laugh and jest bore token of our "right good fellowship."

"A pretty craft, my lads," said a tall, fine-looking fellow, obviously the senior of the group, and whom I had been introduced to as a Mr. O'Hara; "a pretty craft and a bold captain we have, "

I'm no judge. I've been at sea before, but never in as gallant a ship as this. Here's success to THE ARROW — no heel-taps."

The toast was drunk with a huzza, and O'Hara continued the conversation, as if, under the circumstances, he felt that he was the only proper person to play the host.

"You're most of you greenhorns, my boys — excuse the word, but 'tell the truth,' you know — and will not be good for much if this swell continues. One or two of you are getting pale already, and, if I'm not mistaken, Cavendish and I are the only two of the set that have smelt salt-water before. Now, take a word of advice. Cut into the beef like the deuce, never mind if it does make you worse, cut away still, and by-and-bye, when you get all your long-shore swash out of you, you'll find that you feel better than ever. "We're for a long voyage, and many a hard rub you'll get before its over, but never flinch from duty or danger — even if Davy Jones himself stares you in the face. Kick care to the wall, and be merry while you may. But always have an eye to what is due to your superiors. The captain's a gentleman. God bless him! The first lieutenant, I've a notion, is a sour sinner — never let him catch you tripping, — but you needn't mind him further, for he looks as if he ought to be tarred and feathered as the Boston boys served the exciseman. And now, lads, here's to a prosperous voyage, and let's turn in, one and all, for I've got the morning watch, and I've a notion this breeze will have settled down into a regular hurricane, and be blowing great guns and marline-spikes before then."

The air of easy good-humor with which O'Hara spoke, attracted me to him at once. He was evidently my senior, and had seen some service; but it was equally as evident that he affected no superiority which was not his of right. I determined to know him better.

It was still dark when I was aroused from sleep by the calling of the watch, and, hastily springing up, I soon stood upon the deck. The first glance around me proved that O'Hara's anticipations were fulfilled, for the tempest was thundering through the rigging with an almost stunning voice, driving the fine spray wildly along, and blowing with an intensity that threatened to sweep one overboard. The men bent before the blast, and wrapped in their thick overcoats, stood like statues half seen through the mist. The night was bitterly cold — the fine spray cut to the marrow. As far as the eye could see, on every hand around us, the sea, flattened until it was nearly as level as a table, was a mass of driving foam. The binnacle lamp burned faint and dim, with a sickly halo, through the fog. Above, however, all was clear, except a few white, fleecy clouds driven wildly across the frosty stars that twinkled in the heavens. As I ran my eye along the tall taper masts, now bending like rushes in the hurricane, I saw that nearly all the canvas had been taken in, and that we were scudding before the tempest with nothing spread but a close-reefed maintop-sail, a reefed fore-course, and the fore-topmast staysail, and even these, as they strained in the gale, threatened momentarily to blow out into ribbons before the resistless fury of

the wind. Under this comparative press of canvas *THE ARROW* was skimming along, seeming to outvie even the spray in velocity. And well was it that she sped onward with such hot haste! — for, on looking astern, I saw the billows howling after us, urging on their white crests in fearful proximity, and threatening at every surge to roll in over our taffrail. Wilder and wilder, more and even more fiercely they raced each other in the pursuit, like a pack of famished wolves pitching and yelling after their prey.

“Keep her so,” said the first lieutenant, as he left the leek in charge of his successor, “for you see it is neck and neck with those yelling monsters astern. If the sails are blown from the bolt-ropes they must go — but as the canvas is new I think they will stand.”

“Ship ahoy!” shouted a look-out at this moment, starting up as though a thunderbolt had fallen at our feet, “a sail athwart hawse.”

“Where, where?” exclaimed both the officers incredulously.

“Close under our fore-foot — a brig, sir.”

“My God, we shall run her down,” was the exclamation of the second lieutenant.

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction of the approaching danger, and there, sure enough, directly athwart our hawse, a small, trim-looking brig was seen lying-to — the wild hurricane of flying spray, which covered the surface of the deck in places with an almost impervious fog, having hitherto concealed her from our sight. It was evident that the inmates of the brig had but just discovered us for her helm was rapidly shifted, and a few hurried orders, whose import we could not make out, were given on board of her. All, indeed, seemed confusion on the decks of the unhappy craft. Her crew were hurrying to and fro; the officer of the vessel was shouting in his hoarsest tone; two or three forms, as if those of passengers, rushed to the companion way; and to crown all, the sheets were let fly, and with a wild lurch she rolled over, and lay the next moment wallowing in the sea, broadside on. I could almost have jumped on her decks. All this had passed with the rapidity of thought. Never shall I forget the shriek of horror which burst simultaneously from both vessels at this fearful crisis. Already were we close on to the brig, driving with the speed of a sea-gull with the gale, and we knew that before another moment should elapse, ay! almost before another breath could be drawn, the collision must take place. But the lightning is not quicker than the officer of the deck.

“Port — a port — ha-a-*rd*, *hard*,” he thundered, grinding the words betwixt his teeth in his excitement, and waving his hand to larboard, and the helmsman, taking his cue more from the gesture than from the words — for in the uproar of the tempest he could not hear a dozen yards to windward — whirled around the wheel, and our gallant craft, obedient to the impulse like a steed beneath the spur, swept around to starboard. For a second the ill-fated brig could be seen, dancing under our stem, and then, rolling heavily around, she seemed as of she would escape, though narrowly, from her frightful position. A cry of joy was already rising to my lips; but, at that

instant, I heard a crash, followed by a dull grinding noise, and simultaneously I beheld the brig come into collision with us just abaft the cathead, and, while all our timbers quivered with the shock, she whirled away astern, rolling and rubbing frightfully, and half buried in the brine. A shriek rent the air on the instant, whose thrilling tones haunted me for days and nights, and seems even now to ring in my ears.

"God of my fathers!" I exclaimed, "every soul will be lost!"

"Heave her to," thundered the officer of the deck. "For life or death, my lads! Up with the foresail—down with your helm—brace up your after-yards—set the mizzen staysail there."

It is a libel on sailors to say they never feel. No men are more ready to aid the unfortunate. On the present occasion the crew seemed inspired with an energy equal to that of their officer, and springing to their duty performed the rapid orders of the lieutenant in an almost incredible space of time. Happily a momentary lull aided the manœuvre, and our proud craft obeying her helm, came gallantly to.

"Meet her there, quarter-master," continued the officer of the deck; "set the main-staysail—brace up the fore-yards—merrily, merrily—there she has it—" and as these concluding words left his mouth, the manœuvre was finished, and we rode against the wind, rising and falling on the swell, and flinging the spray to our fore-yard arm as we thumped against the seas.

My first thought was of the brig. As soon, therefore, as our craft had been hove-to, I cast a hurried glance over the starboard bow to search for the unfortunate vessel. I detected her at once lying a short distance on our weather-bow,—and it was evident that the injury she had sustained was of the most serious character, for even through the mist we fancied we could see that she was settling deeper in the water. Her officers were endeavoring to heave her to again while rising over their orders, and swelling above all the uproar of the hurricane, we could hear the despairing wail of her passengers. At length she lay-to a few fathoms on our starboard-bow, drifting however, at every surge bodily to leeward. Confusion still reigned on her decks. We could see that the crew were at the pumps; but they appeared to work moodily and with little heart; and we caught now and then the sound of voices as if of the officers in expostulation with the men. A group of female figures also was discernible on the quarter-deck, and a manly form was visible in the midst, as if exhorting them to courage. At the sight a thrill of anguish ran through our breasts. We would have laid down our lives to save them from what appeared to be their inevitable doom, and yet what could we do in the face of such a tempest, and when any attempt to rescue them would only entail ruin on the adventurers, without aiding those we would preserve? As I thought of the impossibility of rendering succor to those shrinking females, as I dwelt on the lingering agonies they would have to endure, as I pictured to myself the brig sinking before our eyes, and we all powerless to prevent it, a thrill of horror

shivered through every nerve of my system, my blood ran cold, my brain reeled around, and I could with difficulty prevent myself from falling, so great was my emotion. But rallying my spirits, I tried to persuade myself it was all a dream. I strained my eyes through the mist to see whether I might not be mistaken — to discover if possible some hope for the forlorn beings on board the brig. But, alas! it was in vain. There were the white dresses blowing about in the gale as the two females knelt on the deck and clung to the knees of their protector — there was the crew mustered at the pumps, while jets of brine were pouring from the scuppers — and there were the crushed and splintered bulwarks betokening that the efforts of the men were dictated by no idle fears. I groaned again in agony. Had it been my own fate to perish thus, I could have borne my doom without a murmur; but to see fellow-creatures perishing before my sight, without my having the power to succor them, was more than I could endure. I closed my eyes on the dreadful scene. Nor were my emotions confined to myself. Not a heart of our vast crew that did not beat with sympathy for our unhappy victims. Old and young, officers and men, hardy veterans and eager volunteers, all alike owned the impulses of humanity, and stood gazing, silent, spell-bound, and horror-struck, on the ill-fated brig and her despairing passengers. At this instant a gray-haired man, whom we knew at once to be her skipper, sprung into the main-rigging of the wreck, and placing his hands to his mouth, while his long silvery locks blew out disheveled on the gale, shouted:

“We — are — sink-ing!” and, as he ceased, a shiver ran through our crew.

“God help us,” said the captain, for that officer had now reached the deck, “can we do nothing for them. And to see them sink before our eyes! But yet I will not despair,” and raising his voice, he shouted, “can’t you hold on until morning, or until the gale subsides a little?”

The skipper of the brig saw by our captain’s gestures, that he had hailed, but the old man could not hear the words in the uproar of the gale, and he shook his head despondingly.

“We are sinking?” he shouted again; “there is a foot of water in the hold, and the sea is pouring in like a cataract. We have been stove.”

Never shall I forget that moment, for, to our excited imaginations, it seemed as if the brig was visibly going down as the skipper ceased speaking. His words sounded in our ears like the knell of hope. A pause of several seconds ensued — a deep, solemn, awe-inspiring pause — during which every eye was fixed on the battered vessel. Each man held his breath, and looked in the direction of the brig, as she rose and fell on the surges, fearful lest the next billow would submerge her forever. We all saw that it was useless to attempt holding any communication with her, for no human voice, even though speaking in a voice of thunder, could be heard against the gale. The two vessels were, moreover rapidly increasing the space betwixt them,

— and, although objects on the deck of the brig had been at first clearly perceptible in the starlight, they had gradually grown dimmer as she receded from us, until now they could scarcely be seen. There was no alternative, therefore, but to abandon her to her fate. The skipper of the brig seemed to have become sensible of this, for, after having remained in the main rigging watching us for several moments longer, he finally descended to the deck, waving his hand mournfully in adieu.

Meantime the aspect of the heavens had materially changed. When I first came on deck, the stars, I have said, were out bright on high, with only a few scud clouds now and then chasing each other over the firmament. Even then, however, I had noticed a small black cloud extending across the western horizon, and giving an ominous aspect to the whole of that quarter of the sky. But during the last half-hour my attention had been so engrossed by the events I have just related, that I lost all consciousness of this circumstance. Now, however, the increasing darkness recalled it to my mind. I looked up. Already dark and ragged clouds, precursors of the vast body of vapors following behind, were dimming the stars overhead, now wrapping the decks in almost total darkness, and now flitting by and leaving us once more in a dim and shadowy light, through which the men loomed out like gigantic specters. The wind had perceptibly decreased, while the sea had risen in proportion. The spray no longer flew by in showers, but the white caps of the billows as they rolled up in the uncertain light, had a ghastliness that thrilled the heart with a strange emotion, almost amounting to superstitious dread. The ship strained and creaked as she rose heavily on the billows, or sunk wallowing far down in the abyss; while ever and anon the sea would strike on her bows like a forge-hammer, breaking in showers of spray high over the fore-castle, and often sending its foam as far back as the main hatchway.

The huge mass of vapors meanwhile had attained the zenith, and was rolling darkly onward toward the opposite horizon. Directly the wind died nearly altogether away, while a total darkness shrouded us in its folds. Even then, however, a few stars could be seen low in the eastern sea-board, twinkling sharp and serene, just under the edge of that ominous cloud, but casting only a faint and dreamy radiance around them, and in vain attempting to penetrate the gloom higher up in the sky. The brig was last seen to the northwest, where the darkness had become most intense. She was still doubtless in that quarter, but no trace of her could be discerned.

“It is as black up yonder as the eye of death,” said the captain, “and I can see nothing there but a dense, impenetrable shadow — your sight is better, Mr. Duval,” he continued, addressing the first lieutenant, “can you make out anything?” The officer shook his head. “Well, we will hail, at any rate. I would not have run afoul of them for my commission!”

The hail rang out startlingly on the night, and every ear listened the response. No answer came.

"Again!" said the captain.

"A-ho-o-y! — Hil-lo-o-o-o!"

A second of breathless suspense followed, and then another, when we were about giving up all hope; but at that instant a faint cry,—it might have been a wail or it might not, God knows! — came floating across the waste of waters. It fell on our listening ears like a lamentation for the dead.

"Heaven preserve us!" solemnly said the captain, "I'm afraid all is over with them."

"Amen!" ejaculated the lieutenant, and for an instant there was a breathless silence, as if each was too awe-struck to speak. Suddenly the huge sails flapped against the mast, bellied out again, and then whipped backward with a noise like thunder. The effect was electric. The captain started and spoke.

"The wind is shifting," he ejaculated, holding up his hand, after having first wet it slightly; "ha! the breeze is coming from the north. It will strike by the mainmast. Let her stretch away at first, but we'll heave to as soon as possible. I wouldn't for the world desert this neighborhood; God grant we may find some vestige of the brig when morning dawns!"

The hurried orders of the officer of the deck to prepare for the coming hurricane had scarcely been given and executed, before it seemed to us as if we could see, even amid the blackness of darkness to the north, the whirling motion of gigantic clouds, and almost simultaneously with a roar as of ten thousand batteries, this new tempest was upon us. Its first fury was beyond description — surpassing imagination — defying belief. It howled, shrieked, and bellowed through the rigging in such awful and varied tones, that the oldest hearts were chilled with fear. It was as if the last convulsive throes of a world was at hand. It was as if the whole fury of the elements had been collected for one last effort — as if tortured nature, made frantic by agony, had broke loose from her tormentors — as if the mighty deep itself, in horror-struck penitence, was thundering its awful "*de profundis*" on the eve of final dissolution. I could scarcely breathe, much less stand. I could only grasp a rope, fling myself almost prostrate, and await either the subsidence of the storm, or the foundering of our ship, — for, during several minutes, it appeared to me as if every second was to be our last. Torrents of water, meanwhile, swept in sheets from the crests of the billows, were whirling like smoke-wreaths along the decks, — while the ravening surges, faintly seen like shadows through the gloom, chased each other in wild and rapid succession along our sides. All was darkness, doubt, and terror.

But happily the duration of the squall was proportioned to its intensity, and, in less than five minutes, the hurricane began to decrease in violence. After the elapse of a short period more the gale rapidly subsided, although its power was still considerable. Before half an hour, however, we were lying to as near to our old position as we could attain, — having suffered no loss except that of

our maintopsail, which was blown from the bolt ropes in the first moment of the squall, but with a noise which was lost in the louder uproar of the wind.

"They have never survived this," said the captain in a melancholy tone, when we were once more snugly hove to; "how many souls are in eternity the All-Seeing Eye only knows! Keep her here," he added after a pause, turning to descend to his cabin, and addressing the officer of the deck, "and with the first streak of light, if the gale shall have abated, as I suspect it will, cruise up to our old position, maintaining a sharp look-out in every direction. But I shall be on deck myself by that time," and with the words, taking a last but fruitless look toward the west, he went below. In half an hour the crowded decks were deserted by all except the silent watch; and no sound broke the whistle of the winds, except the tread of the men, or the cry of "all's well" passing from look-out to look-out along the decks.

With the first appearance of morning I was on deck. The gale had nearly gone down; the clouds had broken away; and the stars were out again, clear and bright, in the firmament. Yet the waves still rolled mountain high around us, now heaving their snowy crests above us in the sky, and now rolling their dark bosoms far away under our stern. Morning slowly dawned. Gradually, one by one, the stars paled on high, and a faint shadowy streak of light began to spread along the eastern sea-board. Over the boundless expanse of waters around us no living object met the eye, so that, in that dim mysterious light, the sense of loneliness was overpowering. But I had no thought then, for aught except the ill-fated brig. I felt an unaccountable interest in her. It seemed as if some unknown sympathy existed betwixt me and those on board of her, as if my destiny in some mysterious manner was connected with theirs. I could not rest on deck, but ascending to the cross-trees I took my station there, and gazed out anxiously over the waste of waters. Our ship had, by this time, been put about, and we were now, as near as I could judge, in the vicinity of the spot where the collision occurred. The moment came which was either to realize or confirm my fears. A strange emotion took possession of me. My heart beat nervously, my breath came heavily, I trembled in every fibre of my system. I strained my eyes in every direction around, and, once or twice, as a billow rolled its white crest upward, I fancied I saw a sail, — but, alas! my agitation had deceived me, and all was a blank, watery waste around. For more than an hour we cruised to and fro, but in vain. As time passed, and hope died away, the officers and men, one by one left the rigging, until finally even the captain gave up the search, and issued a reluctant order to put the ship away on her course. At that instant I saw, far down on the sea-board, what seemed to me a tiny sail; but as we sank in the trough of the sea the object faded from my sight. With eager eyes, I watched for it as we rose on the swell, and — God of my fathers! — it was the long-looked for boat.

“A sail!” I shouted, almost in a phrensy; “they are in sight!”

“Where away?” demanded the officer of the deck, while every eye swept the horizon in eager curiosity.

“On the lee-beam!”

“What do you make it out?”

“A ship’s launch — crowded with human beings!”

“God be praised! — it is the brig’s crew,” ejaculated the captain. Up with your helm, quatermaster — around with her all — there she dances,” and as he spoke the gallant ship wheeled around and in a few moments the brig’s launch was rocking under our bows.

The discipline of a man-of-war could scarcely suppress the loudest demonstrations of emotion on the part of the crew, when the freight of that tempest-tossed launch reached our decks. The sailors of the brig were instantly seized by our tars, and borne forward in triumph, — while our superior grasped the hand of the rescued skipper with visible emotion. But when the two females, with their protector, an elderly, gentlemanly looking man, were safely landed on the quarter deck, every eye was at once attracted to the interesting group. Both the females were young and beautiful, but one was surpassingly lovely. As I gazed on her, it seemed as if some long-forgotten dream had come back to me; but in vain were my attempts to give it reality. At this instant their protector spoke in reply to a question from the captain.

“It is indeed a miracle that we are saved. The brig went down in that fearful squall, and though we had taken to the launch, as a last hope, we did not believe we should live a minute in such a hurricane. But an Omnipotent Power preserved us for some wise ends. All night long we were tossed at the mercy of the waves. We saw you long before you saw us, and thought that you had given up the search, when suddenly your head was brought around in our direction — and here we stand on your decks. To whom are we indebted for our discovery? We owe him our eternal gratitude.”

All eyes were instantly turned towards me, and the captain, taking me by the hand, said,

“Mr. Cavendish has that enviable honor,” at the same time presenting me.

“Cavendish!” exclaimed a silvery female voice in delighted surprise.

At the mention of that name I looked up with eager curiosity, and saw the eyes of the lovely speaker fixed upon me, as if in recognition. She crimsoned to the brow at my eager glance, and as she did so, the crowd of dim recollections in my mind assumed a definite shape, and I recognized in that sweet smile, in that delicately tinted cheek, in those now tearful eyes, in that lustrous brow, the features of my old playmate ANNETTE!

“Cavendish — what, little Henry Cavendish?” exclaimed the gentleman, eagerly seizing my hand. “Yes! it is even so, although the years that have passed since you used to visit Pomfret Hall have

almost eradicated your features from my memory. God bless you, my gallant young friend ! We owe you our lives — our all."

The scene that ensued I will not attempt to describe. Suffice it to say I retired that night with a whirl of strange emotions at my heart.

CHAPTER II.

THE ESCAPE

THE night after the rescue of the passengers and crew of the brig was to me a restless one. I could not sleep. Hour after hour I lay in my hammock eagerly courting repose, but unable to find it, for the images of the past crowded on my brain, and kept me in a feverish excitement that drove slumber from my pillow. My thoughts were of my boyhood,—of Promfret Hall,—of my early schoolmate—and of his little seraph-like sister, Annette. I was back once more in the sunny past. Friends whom I had long forgotten,—scenes which had become strangers to me,—faces which I once knew, but which had faded from my memory, came thronging back upon me, as if by some magic impulse, until I seemed to be once more shouting by the brookside, galloping over the hills, or singing at the side of sweet Annette at Promfret Hall.

I was the son of a decayed family. My parents lived in honorable poverty. But, though reduced in fortune, they had lost none of the spirit of their ancestors. Their ambition was to see their son a gentleman, a man of education. I had accordingly been early put to school, preparatory to a college education. Here I met with a youth of my own age, a proud, high-spirited, generous boy, Stanhope St. Clair. He was the heir of a wealthy and ancient family, whose residence, not far from Boston, combined baronial splendor with classic taste. We formed a fast friendship. He was a year or two my senior, and being stronger than myself, became my protector in our various school-frays; this united me to him by the tie of gratitude. During the vacation I spent a month at his house; here I met his little sister, a sweet-tempered, innocent fairy, some four or five years my junior. Even at that early age I experienced emotions toward her which I am even now wholly unable to analyze, but they came nearer the sentiment of love than any other feeling. She was so beautiful and sweet-tempered, so innocent and frank, so bright, sunny, and smiling, so indefinitely superior to those of her age and sex I had been in the habit of associating with, that I soon learned to look on her with sentiments approaching to adoration. Yet I felt no reserve in her society. Her frankness made me perfect.

ly at home. We played, sung, and laughed together, as if life had nothing for us but sunshine and joy. How often did those old woods, the quaintly carved hall, the green and smiling lawn, ring with our gladsome merriment. We studied, too, together, and as I sat playfully at her feet, looking now on her book and now in her eyes, while her long silken tresses undulated in the breeze and frolicked over my face, I experienced sensations of strange pleasure unlike any thing I had ever experienced. At length the time came when I was to leave this Eden. I remember how desolate I felt on that day, but how from pride in my sex I struggled to hide my emotions. Annette made no attempt to conceal her sorrow. She flung herself into my arms and wept long and bitterly. It was the grief of a child, but it filled my heart with sunshine, and dwelt in my memory for years.

I returned to school, but my playmate was always in my thoughts. In dream or awake, at my tasks or in play, loitering under the forest-trees or wandering by the stream, in the noisy tumult of day or musing in the silent moonshine, the vision of that light-hearted and beauteous girl was ever present to my imagination. It may seem strange that such emotions should occupy the mind of a mere boy; but so it was. At length, however, St. Clair took sick and died. How bitter was my grief at this event. It was the first thing that taught me what real sorrow was. This occurrence broke up my intimacy with the St. Clair family, for, young as I was I could perceive that my presence would be a pain to the family, by continually reminding them of their lost boy. I never therefore visited Pomfret Hall again.—but often would I linger in this vicinity, hoping to catch a glance of Annette. But I was unsuccessful. I never saw her again. Our spheres of life were immeasurably separated, the circles in which she moved knew me not. We had no friends in common, and therefore no medium of communication. God knew whether she thought of me. Her parents, though kind, had always acted toward me as if an impassable barrier existed betwixt the haughty St. Clairs and the beggared Cavendish, and now that their son was no more they doubtless had forgotten me. Such thoughts filled my mind as I grew up. The busy avocations of life interfered, my father died and left me penniless, and, to insure a subsistence for my mother and myself, I went to sea. The dreams of my youth had long since given way to the sad realities of life,—and of all the sunny memories of childhood but one remained. That memory was of Annette.

I had seen Annette only for a moment, as the fatigue they had endured, had confined herself and companion to the cabin during the day. How should we meet on the morrow? My heart thrilled at the recollection of her delighted recognition—would she greet me with the same joy when we met again? How would her father receive me? A thousand such thoughts kept me long awake—and when at length I fell into a troubled sleep, it was to dream of Annette.

When I awoke, the morning watch was being called, and spring

ing from my hammock I was soon at my post on deck. The sky was clear, the waves had gone down, and a gentle breeze was singing through the rigging. To have gazed around on the almost unruffled sea one would never have imagined the fury with which it had raged scarcely forty-eight hours before.

Early in the day Mr. St. Clair appeared on deck, and his first words were to renew his thanks to me of the day before. He alluded delicately to past times, and reproved me gently for having suffered the intimacy betwixt me and his family to decline. He concluded by hoping that, in future, our friendship — for such he called it — would suffer no diminution.

I was attending, after breakfast, to the execution of an order forward, when, on turning my eyes aft, I saw the flutter of a woman's dress. My heart told me it was that of Annette, and, at the instant, she turned around. Our eyes met. Her smile of recognition was even sweeter than that of the day before. I bowed, but could not leave my duty, else I should have flown to her side. It is strange what emotions her smile awakened in my bosom. I could scarcely attend to the execution of my orders, so wildly did my brain whirl with feelings of ecstatic joy. At length my duty was performed. But then a new emotion seized me. I wished and yet I feared to join Annette. But I mustered courage to go aft, and no sooner had I reached the quarter-deck, than Mr. St. Clair beckoned me to his side.

"Annette," he said, "has scarcely yet given you her thanks. She has not forgotten you, indeed she was the first to recognize you yesterday. You remember, love, don't you?" he said, turning to his daughter, "the summer Mr. Cavendish spent with us at the Hall. It was you, I believe, who shed so many tears at his departure."

He said this gayly, but it called the color into his daughter's cheek. Perhaps he noticed this, for he instantly resumed in a different tone.

"But see, Annette here comes the captain, and I suppose you would take a turn on the quarter-deck. Your cousin will accompany him, — Mr. Cavendish must be your *chaperon*."

We were still conversing when my attention was called away by the cry of the look-out that a sail was to be seen to windward. Instantly every eye was turned over the weather-beam, for she was the first sail that had been reported since the gale. An officer seized a glass, and, hurrying to the mast-head, reported that the stranger was considered a heavy craft, although, as yet, nothing but his royals could be seen. As we were beating up to the windward and the stranger was coming free towards us, the distance betwixt the two vessels rapidly decreased, so that in a short time the upper sails of the stranger could be distinctly seen from the deck. His topgallant-yards were now plainly visible from the cross-trees, and the officer aloft reported that the stranger was either a heavy merchantman or a frigate. This increased the excitement on deck, for we knew that there were no vessels of that grade in our navy, and if the approaching sail should prove to be a man-of-war and an Englishman, our chances of escape would be light, as he had the weather-gauge of

us, and appeared, from the velocity with which he approached us, to be a fast sailer. The officers crowded on the quarter-deck, the crew thronged every favorable point for a look-out, and the ladies, gathering around Mr. St. Clair and myself, gazed out as eagerly as ourselves in the direction of the stranger. At length her topsails began to lift.

"Ha!" said the captain, "he has an enormous swing—what think you of him, Mr. Massey?" he asked, shutting the glass violently, and handing it to his lieutenant.

The officer addressed took the telescope and gazed for a minute on the stranger.

"I know that craft," he said, energetically, "she is a heavy frigate—the Ajax—I served in her some eight years since. I know her by the peculiar lift of her topsail."

"Ah!" said the captain; "you are sure," he continued, examining her through his glass again; "she does indeed seem a heavy craft and we have but one chance—we should surely fight her?"

"If you ask me," said the lieutenant, "I say no!—why that craft can blow us out of the water in a couple of broadsides; she chrows a weight of metal treble our own."

"Then there is but one thing to do—we must wear, and take to our heels—a stern chase is proverbially a long one."

During this conversation not a word had been spoken in our group; but I had noticed that when the lieutenant revealed the strength of the foe, the cheek of Annette for a moment grew pale. Her emotion, however, continued but a moment. And when our ship had been wore, and we were careering before the wind, her demeanor betrayed none of that nervousness which characterized her cousin.

"Can they overtake us, Mr. Cavendish?" said her companion. "Oh! what a treacherous thing the sea is. Here we were returning only from Charleston to Boston, yet shipwrecked and almost lost,—and now pursued by an enemy and perhaps destined to be captured."

"Fear not, sweet coz," laughingly said Annette, "Mr. Cavendish would scarcely admit that any ship afloat could outsail *THE ARROW*, and you see what a start we have in the race. Besides, you heard Captain Smyth just now say, that, when night came, he hoped to be able to drop the enemy altogether. Are they pursuing us yet, Mr. Cavendish?"

"Oh, yes: they have been throwing out their light sails for the last quarter-of-an-hour—see, there go some more of their kites."

"But will not we also spread more canvas?"

I was saved the necessity of a reply by an order from the officer of the deck to spread our studding-sails, and duty called me away. I left the ladies in the charge of Mr. St. Clair, and hurried to my post. For the next half hour I was so occupied that I had little opportunity to think of Annette, and indeed the most of my time was spent below in superintending the work of the men. When I returned on deck the chase was progressing with vigor, and it was

very evident that THE ARROW, though a fast sailer, was hard pressed. Every stitch of canvas that could be made to draw was spread, but the stranger astern had, notwithstanding, considerably increased on the horizon since I left the deck. The officers were beginning to exchange ominous looks, and the faces of our passengers wore an anxious expression. One or two of the elder members of the crew were squinting suspiciously at the stranger. The captain, however, wore his usual open front, but a close observer might have noticed that my superior glanced every moment at the pursuer, and then ran his eye as if unconsciously up our canvas. At this moment the cry of "a sail" rang down from the mast-head, startling us as if we had heard a voice from the dead, for so intense had been the interest with which we had regarded our pursuer, that not an eye gazed in any direction except astern. The captain looked quickly around the horizon, and hailing the look-out, shouted,

"Whereaway?"

"On the starboard-bow."

"What does he look like?" continued Captain Smythe to me, for I had taken the glass at once, and was now far on my way to the cross-trees.

"He seems a craft about as heavy as our own."

"How now?" asked the captain, when sufficient space had elapsed to allow the topsails of the new visitor to be seen.

"She has the jaunty cut of a corvette," I replied.

A short space of time — a delay of breathless interest — sufficed to betray the character of the ship ahead. She proved as I expected, a corvette. Nor were we long left in doubt as to her flag, for the red field of St. George shot up to her gaff, and a cannon-ball ricochetting across the waves, plumped into the sea a few fathoms ahead of our bow. For a moment we looked at each other in dismay at this new danger. We saw that we were beset. A powerful foe was coming up with us hand over hand astern, and a craft fully our equal was heading us off. Escape seemed impossible. The ladies, who still kept the deck, turned pale and clung closer to their protector's arm. The crew were gloomy. The officers looked perplexed. But the imperturbable calm of the captain suffered no diminution. He had already ordered the crew to their quarters, and the decks were now strewn with preparations for the strife.

"We will fight him," he said; "we will cripple or sink him, and then keep on our way. But let not a shot be fired until I give the order. Steady, quarter-master steady."

By this time I had descended to the deck, ready to take my post at quarters. The ladies still kept the deck, but the captain's eye happened to fall on them, the stern expression of his countenance gave way to one of a milder character, and, approaching them he said,

"I am afraid, my dear Miss St. Clair, that this will soon be no place for you or your fair companion. Allow me to send you to a place of safety. Ah! here is Mr. Caendish, he will conduct you below."

"Oh! Mr. Cavendish," said Isabel, with a tremulous voice, "is there any chance of escape?"

Annette did not speak, but she looked up into my face with an anxious expression, while the color went and came in her cheek. My answer was a confident assertion of victory, although, God knows, I scarcely dared to entertain the hope of such a result. It reassured my fair companions, however, and I thought that the eyes of Annette at least expressed the gratitude which did not find vent in words.

"We will not forget you in our prayers," said Isabel, as I prepared to reascend to the deck; "farewell — may — may we meet again!" and she extended her hand.

"God bless you and our other defenders," said Annette. She would have added more, but her voice lost its firmness. She could only extend her hand. I grasped it, pressed it betwixt both of mine, and then tore myself away. As I turned from them, I thought I heard a sob. I know that a tear-drop was on that delicate hand when I pressed it in my own.

When I reached the deck, I found Mr. St. Clair already at his post for he had volunteered to aid in the approaching combat. Nor was that combat long delayed. We were now close on to the corvette, but yet not a shot had been fired from our batteries, although the enemy was beginning a rapid and furious cannonade, under which our brave tars chafed like chained lions. Many a tanned and sun-browned veteran glared fiercely on the foe, and even looked curiously and doubtingly on his officers, as the balls of the corvette came hustling rapidly and more rapidly towards us, and when at length a shot dismounted one of our carriages and laid four of our brave fellows dead on the deck, the excitement of the men became almost uncontrollable. At this instant, however, the corvette yawed, bore up, and ran off with the wind on his quarter. Quick as lightning Captain Smythe availed himself of the bravado.

"Lay her alongside, quarter-master," he thundered.

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the old water-rat, and during a few breathless moments of suspense we crowded silently after the corvette. That suspense, however was of short duration. We were now on the quarter of the enemy. The captain paused no longer, but waving his sword, he shouted "FIRE," and simultaneously our broadside was poured in, like a hurricane of fire, on the foe. Nor during ten minutes was there any intermission in our fire. The combat was terrific. The men jerked out their pieces like playthings, and we could soon hear over even the din of the conflict, the crashing of the enemy's hull and the falling of his spars. The rapidity and certainty of our fire meanwhile seemed to have paralyzed the foe, for his broadsides were delivered with little of the fury which we had been led to expect. His foremast at length went by the board. The silence of our crew was now first broken, and a deafening huzza rose up from them, shaking the very welkin with the uproar.

“Another broadside my brave fellows,” said Captain Smyth, “and then lay aloft and crowd all sail — I think she’ll hardly pursue us.”

“Huzza, boys, pour it into her,” shouted a grim-visaged captain of a gun; “give her a parting shake, huzza!”

Like a volcano in its might — like an earthquake reeling by — sped that fearful broadside on its errand. We did not pause to see what damage we had done, but while the ship yet quivered with the discharge, the men sprang aloft, and before the smoke had rolled away from the decks, our canvas was once more straining in the breeze, and we were rapidly leaving our late enemy. When the prospect cleared up, we could see her lying a hopeless wreck astern. The frigate which during the conflict, had drawn close upon us, was now sending her shots like hailstones over us, but when she came abreast of her consort she was forced to stop, as our late foe by this time had hung out a signal of distress. We could see that boats, laden with human beings, were putting off from the corvette to the frigate, which proved that our late antagonist was in a sinking condition. Before an hour she blew up with a tremendous explosion.

I was the first one to hurry below and relieve the suspense of Annette and her cousin by apprising them of our success. A few hours repaired the damage we had sustained, and before nightfall the frigate was out of sight astern. So ended our first conflict with the enemy.

CHAPTER III.

A DASH AT A CONVOY.

It was the second night after our brush with the corvette, when a party, composed of Mr. St. Clair, his niece and daughter, together with several of the officers, stood at the side of the ship. It was a lovely evening. The moon was high in heaven, sailing on in cloudless splendor; her silvery light tipping the tops of the billows, and stretching in a long line of effulgence across the waters. A gentle breeze was singing, with a clear musical intonation, among the thousand tiny threads of the rigging. The water rippled pleasantly against the sides of the ship. Not far off lay a small rakish schooner, from which the sound of a bugle, borne gently on the night air, floated in delicious melody to our ears. The decks were noiseless. The quiet moon seemed as if, by some magic spell, she had hushed the deep into silence, for scarcely a sound rose up from the heaving waves, which, glittering now in the wake of the moon, and now

sinking into sudden shadow, stretched away in the distance until they faded into the dim mystic haze of the distant sea-board. The whole scene was like a vision of romance.

The group which I have mentioned stood at the gangway of the ship. A boat was rocking gently below. The passengers, whom we had rescued from the brig, were about transferring themselves to the schooner lying to a short distance off, which we had spoken about an hour before, and which proved to be a small privateer bound in for Newport. As we were off Block Island and the run would consequently be a short one, Mr. St. Clair had resolved to avail himself of this opportunity to place his daughter and niece safely on shore. The party were now about to embark.

"I shall never forget your kindness," said Mr. St. Clair, addressing the captain, "and I am sure that my daughter and niece will give you their especial prayers, as the best return they can make for the obligations they owe you. And as for my friend, Mr. Cavendish—I hardly know how to express my thanks. You will come and see us," he continued, turning frankly to me, and taking both my hands, "Pomfret Hall will always open its doors gladly to welcome the preserver of its owner."

I promised that I would not forget it, and turned away to hide the emotion occasioned by the kind tone of Mr. St. Clair. As I moved away my eyes fell on Annette. Her gaze was fixed on me with an expression I shall never forget, but which I would have given the world to have been able to interpret. There was an expression of the deepest interest in that look, and the eyes, I fancied, were partially humid. As soon as she caught my gaze, she blushed deeply, and looked down. What meant that earnest gaze—this sudden embarrassment? Did she then really love me? My heart beat fast, my brain fairly swam around, my emotion, for an instant, almost overpowered me. I could, if no one had been present, have rushed to her feet and told her my suit. But a moment's reflection changed the current of my thoughts. Perhaps she had noticed my feelings while her father had been speaking. If so, her subsequent emotion arose from being detected in observing me. I ran over every thing which had happened since she had been on board, and could find nothing corroborating, directly, the idea that she loved me. Her manner had always been frank and kind; but what had she said or done to give me hope? As these thoughts rushed through my mind my towering hopes fell. The revulsion was extreme. I despaired now as much as I had exulted but a moment before. I was about to turn gloomily away, when the voice of Isabel called me. I looked up. She was beckoning me gayly towards her as she leaned on Annette's arm.

"Why, I declare, Mr. Cavendish," she said, laughingly, "you seem to be determined to let us depart without even saying 'adieu'—a pretty gallant, you are, to be sure! Here is Annette really displeased at your coldness."

A look of silent reproach was the only reply of her cousin, who

dared not raise her eyes to mine. With the vacillation of a lover my sentiments again underwent a change. Had Annette really been wondering at my coldness? How unjust then had been my suspicions. I advanced eagerly to her side, yet when I had done so I knew not what to say. Isabel seemed not only to see my embarrassment but to enjoy it. She continued gayly —

“There, now, do your *devoir* like a gallant knight and soldier — coz, have you no glove or other favor for him to wear on his bosom in battle? Ah, me! the days of courtesy and chivalry have gone forever. But there — I see uncle ordering down my package; I must see that he does not let it drop clumsily overboard,” and she tripped laughingly away.

Left almost *tete-a-tete* with Annette — for every eye was at that moment turned to the gangway where some of the passengers were already embarking, I yet felt unable to avail myself of an opportunity for which I had longed. A single word would decide my fate, and yet that word I could not pronounce. My boldness had all disappeared, and I stood before that fair girl equally agitated with herself. At length I looked up. She stole a furtive glance at me as I did so, and blushed again to the very brow. I took her hand, it was not withdrawn. Words of fire were already on my lips when her father turned towards us, saying —

“Annie, my love, they wait for you — Mr. Cavendish, a last good-by” — and as he spoke every eye was turned toward us. The precious moment was past. I could do nothing but lead Annette forward. Yet I ventured to press her hand. My senses deceived me, or it was faintly, though very faintly, returned. I would have given worlds, if I had them, for the delay of a minute, that I might learn my fate from the lips of that fair girl. But it was not to be. We were already in the center of the group. Mr. St. Clair took his daughter and lifted her into the chair, and in another moment her white dress fluttered in its descent to the boat. My heart died within me. The golden moment had passed, perhaps forever; for when should we meet again? New scenes, new friends, would in all probability drive me from Annette’s remembrance before we should next see each other. These thoughts filled my mind as I leaned over the bulwark and waved my hand while the boat put off. Mr. St. Clair stood up in the barge, and bowed in return, while I thought I could see, the fair hand of Annette returning my parting adieus.

I watched the receding figures until they reached the schooner, and even after they had ascended the deck, and the two vessels had parted each on its own way, I continued gazing on the white dress of Annette until I could no longer detect the faintest shadow of it. When at length it disappeared totally in the distance, I felt a loneliness of the heart, such as no language can express. To a late hour I continued pensively walking the deck, unable to shake off this feeling, and it was only a gay remark of one of my messmates that finally aroused me from my abstraction. I shook off my pensiveness by an effort, laughed gaily in reply, and soon sought my hammock.

as my spirits would not permit me much longer to carry on this double game.

For a week we cruised in the track of the homeward-bound fleet from the West Indies, but without success. During this time Annette was constantly in my thoughts. Her last look — that gentle pressure of her hand thrilled through every vein, as often as they recurred to me. Never could I forget her — would she continue to think of me?

More than a week had passed, as I have said, since we had parted from the St. Clairs, yet still we had not spoken a sail. At length, one day, when I had the morning watch, the lookout hailed from the cross-trees, that a sail was down on the sea-board to leeward. Chase was instantly given to the stranger. The breeze was fresh, and we were in consequence soon close enough to discern the character of our neighbor. She had not from the first appeared to avoid us, and no sooner did we show our colors, than she ran up the ensign of France. We were going on different tacks, and as we approached, both ships lay-to for a moment's conversation. The French merchantman was a noble ship, and as she came up gallantly toward us, her long bowsprit sunk far down into the trough of the wave, and then, with a slow, swan-like motion, she rose on the ensuing swell until her bows were elevated almost clear of the water, while the bright copper dripping with brine, glistened gloriously in the sunbeams.

The Frenchman backed his topsails as he drew near, and the two vessels stood head on, while we sent a boat on board. The merchantman proved to be upon her homeward passage, and had consequently no intelligence from Europe to furnish us. But the French skipper told us what was far more interesting to us. He mentioned that he had, but the day before, fallen in with the homeward-bound English fleet, from the West Indies, amounting to some sixty sail. The fleet was convoyed by four men-of-war. Our captain, however, resolved to have a dash at the convoy. He conceived the daring project of cutting off a portion of the fleet, under the very batteries of the men-of-war. The French skipper wished us a "*bon voyage*," and the two vessels parted company.

We cracked on all sail, during the whole of the day and night. The next morning, at the dawn of day, our look-out descried the English fleet, on our larboard-side. Luckily, we had the weather-gage. We kept crowding on our canvas, however, during the whole forenoon, and as we gained on the convoy, we saw sail after sail rising in the sea-board, until the whole horizon was dotted with them, and the look-out reported more than fifty, in sight. By this time the men-of-war had caught the alarm, and were firing guns to call their flock around them. The dull sailors, however, fell rapidly behind. This forced one of the English frigates to leave the advance, and run astern of the fleet. During the whole day we kept coquetting to windward of the fleet, but no demonstrations against us were made on the part of the men-of-war.

"A cowardly set, by the Lord Harry," said our old boatswain, who often beguiled a dull hour with a yarn. "Here are we giving them a chance for a fair fight, and the cowardly lubbers haven't the pluck to come up and take or give a thrashing. I can't stand such sneaking scoundrels — by St. George," and the old fellow energetically squirted a stream of tobacco-juice from his mouth, as if from a force-pump.

"We'll have a brush with them, nevertheless, Hinton," said I, "or I know nothing of the captain. He has got his eye on more than one rich prize in that fleet, and depend on it, he'll make a dash for it before long."

"Ay! ay! you're right," answered the boatswain, "and he'll do it, too, before two bells have struck in the morning watch."

The night shut in squally and dark. The fleet was some three miles to leeward, for during the whole day we had carefully maintained the weather-gage.

As the darkness increased we lost sight of the enemy's ships, but their numerous lights, glistening like stars along the sea-board, still pointed out to us their position. The wind was uncertain, now coming in fitful puffs, and then blowing steadily for a quarter-of-an-hour, when it would again die away and sweep in squalls across the waste of waters. Scud clouds began to fly across the face of the heavens, obscuring the few stars, and giving a wild and ominous appearance to the firmament. Down to the west the sea-board was covered by a dense bank of clouds, out of which occasionally a flash of lightning would zig-zag, followed by a low, hoarse growl of distant thunder. It was evident that a tempest was raging, far down in that quarter. On the opposite horizon, however, the sky was nearly free from clouds, only a few fleecy vapors being discernible in that quarter, through which the bright stars twinkled clear and lustrous. The English fleet lay between these two opposite quarters of the horizon — the right wing of the convoy stretching down almost into the utter darkness in that direction, and the left wing skirting along the horizon to the eastward. All along the whole expanse of sea-board, more than fifty lights were now glittering, like so many fire-flies winging through the gloom along the edge of the forest on a summer eve. The scene was one of surpassing novelty, and drew forth the admiration even of our veteran tars. Now and then the vapors in the east would clear entirely away, leaving the firmament in that direction, sparkling with thousands of stars; and then again the murky shroud would inclose them in nearly total darkness. Occasionally, as if in contrast to this, a brighter flash of lightning would gleam, or a louder burst of thunder roll up from the dark bank of clouds inclosing the tempest to the westward.

The night had scarcely settled down before the ship's course was altered, and we bore down upon the fleet — taking the precaution, however, to put out all the lights on board except the one at the binnacle. Meantime the men were called to quarters, the tompons of the guns removed, the ammunition served out, pikes, cutlasses,

and firearms distributed among the crew, and every preparation made for action. As we drew nearer to the convoy the darkness of the night increased, until, at length, we could see but a few fathoms ahead into the gloom. The eastern firmament now became wholly obscured. Not a star shone on high to guide us on our way. Had it not been for the long line of lights sparkling along the sea-board, betraying the position occupied by the various vessels in the convoy, we should have possessed no guide to our prey, — and nothing but the confidence felt by the enemy in his superior force could have induced him to continue his lights aboard, when otherwise he might have run a chance of dropping us in the darkness. But he never dreamed of the bold swoop which we projected into the very midst of his flock. He would as soon have thought of our blockading the Thames, or burning the English fleet at Portsmouth.

The plan of Captain Smythe was indeed a bold one. Bearing right onward into the very center of the fleet, he intended to cut off one of the wings from the main body, and then board and take possession of as many of the merchantmen as he could carry in the obscurity. We judged that the men-of-war were in the van, with the exception of a frigate which we had seen before nightfall hovering in the rear of the fleet to cover the lagging merchantmen. This frigate, however, we supposed to be on the extreme right of the enemy. We therefore bore down for the opposite extremity of the fleet.

For more than an hour, while, with every rag of canvas abroad we were hastening to overtake the enemy, scarcely a word was spoken by the crew, — but each man remained at his station eagerly watching the gradual diminution of the distance betwixt us and the convoy. Indeed, silence was, in some measure, necessary to the success of our plot. Even the orders of the officers therefore were given and executed with as little bustle as possible. As the darkness increased we noticed that the lights ahead began to diminish in number, and it was not long before we became satisfied that the foe had at length awoken to the probability of our being in the vicinity. At length scarcely more than half a dozen lights could be seen. These we judged to belong to the men-of-war, being kept aloft for the convoy to steer by.

The difficulty of our enterprise was now redoubled, for if the darkness should increase, there would be great danger of a collision with one or another of the fleet. This peril, however, we shared in common with the merchantmen composing the convoy. Our only precaution consisted in doubling our look-outs.

Another hour passed, during which we steered by the lights of the men-of-war. By the end of that period we had run, according to our calculation, into the very heart of the fleet, leaving a man-of-war broad on our larboard beam, a mile or two distant. This latter vessel we fancied to be the frigate which had been hovering toward nightfall in the rear of the fleet. Our anxiety now increased. We were surrounded, on every side, by the vessels of the convoy, and the obscurity was so profound that we could not see a pistol-shot on any

hand. Our progress, meantime, was continued in utter silence. The only sound we heard was the singing of the wind through the rigging, the occasional cheeping of a block, or the rushing of the water along our sides. Suddenly, however, I thought I heard a sound as of the bracing of a yard right over our starboard bow.

"Hist!" I said to the boatswain, who happened that moment to be passing; "hist! do you hear that?"

The old fellow stopped, listened a moment, and then shaking his head, said,

"I hear nothing. What did *you* hear?"

"Hark! there it goes again," I said, as the sound of a sail dapping against a mast came distinctly out of the gloom.

"By St. George, you are right," exclaimed the old water rat. "ay! ay! young ears are arter all the sharpest!"

He had scarcely spoken before the tall masts of a ship, like a specter rising through the night, lifted themselves up out of the obscurity in the direction whence the sound had proceeded, and instantaneously we heard the tramping of many feet on the decks of the stranger, the rapid orders of the officers, the running of ropes, the creaking of yards, and the dull flapping of sails in the wind. At the same time a voice hailed,

"Luff up, or you'll be into us," and then the same voice spoke, as if addressing the helmsman on board the stranger, "up with your helm — around, around with her — my God! we'll be afoul."

The consternation of the British skipper was not without cause. No sooner had Captain Smythe discovered our proximity to the stranger, than he formed the determination of running her aboard, taking her by a sally of our brave fellows, and then, after throwing into her a party sufficiently strong to maintain possession of her, keeping on his way. During the minute, therefore, that elapsed betwixt the discovery of the merchantman, and the hail of her affrighted skipper, the boarders had been called away and the quarter-master ordered to run us bows on to the quarter of the stranger. Instead of luffing, therefore, we kept straight on in our course, and as a score of lanterns were instantly shown on board both ships, sufficient light was thrown over the scene to guide us in our manoeuvre. As the English ship wore around, bringing the wind on her starboard quarter, our helm was jammed to port, and swinging around almost on our heel we shot upon the foe, striking her in the stern galley, which we crushed as we would have crushed an egg-shell. The English ship was heavily loaded, and in consequence our bowsprit ran high above her decks, affording a bridge on which our brave tars might easily pass on board. At the moment we struck, the captain dashed forward, and summoning the boarders to follow him, had leaped, sword in hand, into the center of the enemy's crew, before her skipper had ceased giving orders to the perplexed seamen, who were running to and fro on her decks, in the vain hope of preventing any damage resulting to them from this collision, with, as they thought, a sister vessel. The consternation

of the master may well be conceived when he found his ship in possession of an enemy. For some minutes he imagined it to be a jest, for he could not conceive how any foe could have the audacity to cut him out from the very heart of the fleet. His rueful countenance when he discovered his error, I shall never forget, nor the bawdy grace with which he consented to be transferred with a portion of his men to *THE AURORA*. In less than five minutes, however, this necessary precaution had been carried into effect, and a prize crew left in possession of the merchantman. The officer in command was ordered to haul out of the fleet, and gain a position as speedily as possible to windward. Then the two ships were parted, and we stood away as before on the larboard tack, while the prize braced sharp up, hauled her bowlines, and went off close into the wind's eye.

"By Jove," said a reefer, elated with the part he had acted among the boarders, for he had been one of the first to step on the decks of the merchantman, "by Jupiter, but that was neatly done — eh! don't you think so, Hinton, my old boy?"

"Shut your dead-lights, you young jackanapes," growled the old boatswain, by no means pleased with such a salutation, "and keep your tongue for cheering against the enemy; you'll have enough of it to do before you turn in. Avast there! I say," he continued, perceiving that the youngster was about to interrupt him; "go to your post, or I'll report you, you young whelp. None of your blarney, as your thick tongued Irish messmate would say — away with you."

When Hinton's ire was up, the safest plan was to retreat, for he would brook no retort unless from the captain or lieutenant. Over the young reefers, especially those who were in disfavor with him, he domineered with a rod of iron. The youngster, who had forgotten for a moment, in the elation of his first victory, the awe in which he held the boatswain, was recalled by these words to a sense of the authority of the old tar, and he shrunk accordingly away, disdaining to reply.

"Ay! go, you varmint," chuckled Hinton, as the reefer walked to his post, "and give none of your long shore palaver to a man who had learned before you were born to hold his tongue before an enemy as his first duty. Isn't it so, Mr. Cavendish?"

I was a great favorite of the old fellow, and always made a point of humoring him, so I nodded an assent to his remark, although I was tempted to ask him how long since he had forgotten this important duty of silence. I restrained, however, my question, and the smile which would vain have preceded it, and listened several minutes in return for this complaisance to a long philippic on the part of the old fellow, against what he chose to call the almost universal presumption of midshipmen. From this tirade, however, the boatswain condescended to exempt me. How long he would have dilated upon this favorite subject, I know not; but, at this moment, a hail came out of the gloom ahead, and every eye was instantly attracted in the direction from which the voice proceeded.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted an herculean voice; "what craft is that?"

The tone of the speaker betrayed a latent suspicion that all was not right with us. Indeed, he must have been so close to us in our late encounter with the merchantman, that he necessarily heard many things to awaken his doubts. As he spoke, too, the tall figure of a heavy craft loomed out from the obscurity, and while we were yet speculating as to the answer the captain would make, a dozen lanterns flashed through as many open port-holes, revealed that our neighbor was a man-of-war.

"What ship is that?" thundered the voice, "answer or I'll fire into you!"

Our dauntless captain waved his hand for the batteries to be unmasked, and springing into the mizzen-rigging, while a neighboring battle-lantern now disclosed to the night, flung its light full upon his form, he shouted in an equally stentorian voice —

"This is THE AURORA — commissioned by the good commonwealth of —"

"Give it to the canting rebel," roared the British officer, breaking in on this reply; "fire — for God and St. George — FIRE!"

"Ay! fire my brave boys," thundered our leader; "one and all, for the old thirteen — FIRE!"

From the moment when the enemy had disclosed his lighted ports, our gallant tars had been waiting, like hounds in the leash, for the signal which was to let them loose upon the foe. The silent gesture of the captain, when he sprung into the mizzen-rigging, had been intuitively understood by the crew, and the orders of the proper officers were scarcely waited for, before the ports were opened, the battle-lanterns unmasked, the guns run out and the whole deck changed, as if by magic, from a scene of almost Egyptian darkness to one of comparative light. Nor were the men less ready to discover the moment when to open their fire. The first word of the British officer's haughty interruption had scarcely been spoken, when the gunners began to pat their pieces and squint knowingly along them, so that, when the command to fire was given, our whole broadside went off at once, like a volcano, and with deadly effect. Every gun had been accurately aimed, every shot was sent crashing into the foe. Not so the enemy. Although the British captain had certainly viewed us with suspicion, his crew had apparently thought us deserving of little caution; and the reply of our leader, and the order of their own to fire, took them, after all, with surprise. Nearly a minute accordingly elapsed before they delivered their broadside, and then it was done hurriedly and with little certainty of aim. The first fire is always more effective than the ensuing six; and the advantage of the surprise was decided; for while we could hear the crashing of timbers, and the shrieks of the wounded, following our discharge, the shot of the enemy passed mostly over our heads, and in my vicinity, not a man of our crew was killed. One poor fellow however, fell wounded at the gun next to mine.

"Huzza!" roared Hinton, leaping like a lion to fill the place of the injured man, "they've got their grog already. Have at 'em, my brave fellows, again, and revenge your messmate. Jack," he said, turning to the bleeding man, "every one must have a kick sometime in his life, and the sooner it's over, my hearty, the better. Bouse her out, shipmates! Huzza for old Nantucket — the varmin'ts have it again on full allowance!"

For ten minutes the fight was maintained on our side without cessation. The enemy, at first, rallied and attempted to return our broadsides promptly, but the injuries she had suffered from our first discharge had disheartened her men, and, when they found the spirit with which we maintained our fire, they soon gave up the contest and deserted their guns. Still, however, the enemy did not strike. One or two of her forward guns were occasionally and suddenly discharged at us, but all systematic resistance had ceased in less than five minutes.

By this time, however, the whole fleet was in uproar. Lights were flashing in every quarter of the horizon, and as the darkness had been clearing away since our brush with the merchantman, our lookout aloft could see through the faint, misty distance, more than one vessel bearing down towards us. The majority, however, of the fleet, seemed to be struck with a complete panic, and, like a flock of startled partridges, were hurrying from us, in every direction. It soon became apparant that the ships, bearing down upon us, were armed; and before we had been engaged ten minutes with our antagonist, no less than three men-of-war, from as many quarters of the horizon had opened a concentric fire on us, regardless of the damage they would do their consort. Still, however, unwilling to leave his antagonist without compelling her to strike, our leader maintained his position and poured in a series of rapid broadsides which cut the foe up fearfully. Yet she would not strike. On the other hand, reanimated by the approach of her consorts, her men rallied to her guns and began again to reply to our broadsides. Meanwhile the hostile frigates were coming up to us, hand over hand, increasing the rapidity of their cannonade as the distance betwixt us lessened. Our situation was becoming momentarily more critical. Yet even amid our peril my eye was attracted by the sublimity of the scene.

The night, I have said, had partially cleared away, but the darkness was still sufficiently intense to render the approaching frigate but dimly visible, except when a gush of fire would stream from their ports, lighting up, for the moment, with a ghastly glare, the smoke encircled hull, the tall masts, and the thousand mazes of the harper. Often the whole three vessels would discharge their broadsides at once, when it would seem for an instant as if we were girdled by fire. Then, as the smoke settled on their decks, they would disappear wholly from our sight, and only become again distinguishable, when they belched forth their sulphurous flame once more. In the west, the scene was even more magnificent, for in that quarter, was unexpectedly the nearest of the three men-of-war, and as she came up to

as close-hauled, she yawed whenever she fired, and then steadily discharged her pieces, doing more damage than all her other consorts. The gallant manner in which she delivered her fire — the measured, distinct booming of her long twenty-fours — and more than all, the inky hue of the sky in the background, brought out into the boldest relief by the light of her guns, made up a picture of gloomy grandeur, which the imagination can compare to nothing, except the fitful, ghastly gleams of light shooting across the darkness of that infernal realm which Dante has painted with his pen of horror. While, however, I was gazing awe-struck on this scene, I noticed that the dark bank of clouds behind the frigate was visibly in motion, rolling up towards us. Our superior-officer had, perhaps, noticed the same phenomenon, and, knowing what it portended, had remained by his antagonist, when otherwise our only chance of escape would have been in an early flight. Some of the older tars now perceived the approaching tempest, and paused from the combat. Indeed, not a moment was to be lost. I had scarcely time to look once more in the direction of the other frigates, and then turn again to the westward, before our antagonist in that quarter was completely shut in by the squall. The wind had, meantime, died away, leaving us rocking unquietly in the swell. A pause of a minute ensued, a pause of the most breathless suspense. The men had instinctively left their guns, and stood awaiting the directions of their leaders to whom they looked in this emergency. We were happily nearly before the wind, which could now be seen lashing the foam from the billows, and driving down upon us with the speed of a race-horse. Another instant and the squall would be upon us. All this, however, had passed, in less time than is occupied in the relation, for scarcely a minute had elapsed, since I first saw the approaching squall, before Captain Smythe shouted,

“Stand by to clew down — quick there all !”

The command was not an instant too soon. His opening words were heard distinctly in the boding calm that preceded the squall, but the concluding sentence was lost in the hissing and roaring of the hurricane that now swept across our decks. The captain saw that it was useless to attempt to speak in the uproar, and waving his hand for the quarter master to keep her away, while the men instinctively clewed down the topsail-yards, and hauled out the reef-tackles, he awaited the subsidence of the squall. For five minutes we went skimming before the tempest, like a snow-flake in a storm. On — on — on, we drove, the fine spray hissing past us on the gale, and the shrill scream of the wind through our hamper deafening our ears. Whither we were going, or what perils might meet us in our mad career, we knew not. We were flying helplessly onward, inclosed by the mist at the mercy of the winds. Even if the intensity of the squall would have allowed us to bring by the wind and reef, prudence would dictate that we should run before the hurricane, as the only chance of escaping from the clutches of our foes. Yet, surrounded as we were by the merchantmen of the fleet, we

knew not but the next moment we might run down some luckless craft, and perhaps, by the collision, sink both them and ourselves.

For nearly half an hour we drove thus before the hurricane. More than once we fancied that we heard the shrieks of drowning men, rising high over all the uproar of the tempest, but whether they were in reality the cries of the dying, or only the sounds created by an over-heated imagination, and having no existence except in the brain of the hearer, God only knows! A thousand ships might have sunk within a cable's length of us, and not a prayer of the sufferers, not a shriek of despair have met our ears. There was a fearfulness in that palpable darkness, which struck the most veteran heart with an awe akin to fear. When men can look abroad and see the real extent of the peril which surrounds them they can dare almost any thing; but when surrounded by darkness, their imaginations conjure up dangers in every strange intonation of the tempest, in every new outbreak of the surge. They tremble at what they can not behold; in the language of the Scripture, "their joints are loosed with fear."

At length the fury of the squall began to subside, and the dark bank of clouds which had encircled us, undulated, rolled to and fro, and finally flew in ragged vapors away, flitting wildly past the stars that once more twinkled in the sky. As the prospect brightened, we looked eagerly around to see what damage the squall had occasioned. The fleet was scattered hither and thither over the horizon, torn, shattered, dismantled, powerless. Far up in the quarter from whence the hurricane had burst could be faintly seen the body of the convoy; but on every hand around some of the less fortunate ships were discoverable. Whether, however, most of the merchantmen had attempted to lie-to, or whether we had scudded before the gale with the velocity which none could rival, it was evident that we had passed away like a thunderbolt from the rest of the fleet, leaving them at a hopeless distance astern.

Owing to the rapidity with which our canvas had been got in, we suffered no material injury; and, when the gale subsided and the wind came out again from the north, we lost no time in hauling up and getting the weather-gage of the convoy. The ship was put once more in trim — the crew then turned in, and the watches were left in undisturbed possession of the decks. As I stood at my post and watched the bright stars overhead, shining placidly upon me, or listened to the cry of "All's well!" passed from look-out to look out across the deck, I could not help contrasting the peace and silence of the scene with the fearful uproar of the preceding hour.

When morning dawned, not a vestige of the fleet remained on the southern sea-board. Our anxiety was now turned to the fate of the merchantman we had captured, and that of the prize crew we had thrown into her. But toward the afternoon watch, a sail was discovered on the horizon to windward, and when we had approached within a proper distance we recognized our prize. Our joy at re-joining may well be imagined.

The prize proved to be laden with a valuable cargo, and, as this was the first capture of any moment we had made, it raised the spirits of the men in a commensurate degree. The skipper of the merchantman could never comprehend the justness of his capture. Like the generals whom Napoleon has been beating at a later day, he protested that he had been taken against all the rules of war.

After keeping company with us for a few days, the prize hauled up for the coast with the intention of going into Newport. We subsequently learned that she accomplished her aim, but not until she had run the gauntlet of an English fleet. As for ourselves, we stood toward the south, on the look-out for a new prize.

CHAPTER IV

THE PIRATE.

It was a tropical night. The moon had gone down, but the stars shone clear and lustrous, with a brilliancy unknown to more temperate climes, painting a myriad of silvery lines along the smooth swell of the sleeping ocean. A light breeze was murmuring across the waters, now and then rippling the waves in the starlight, and flapping the reef-points occasionally against the sails. A heavy dew was falling, bringing with it, from the island that lay far up to windward, a thousand spicy odors mingled into one delicious perfume. On the extreme verge of the horizon hung a misty veil, shrouding the sea-board in obscurity. Up to windward the same delicate gauze-like vapor was perceptible, and the position of the island, which we had made at twilight, was only to be told from the denser masses of mist, that had gathered in one particular spot on the horizon in that quarter.

It was the morning watch, and I was standing, wrapped up in my monkey jacket, looking out dreamingly on the ripples that played under our side in the starlight, when the bluff voice of the boat swain addressed me, at the same time that the old fellow wrung an enormous piece of tobacco from a still larger mass that he held in his brawny hand.

"A still night, Mr. Cavendish," began Hinton, "it looks as if the old salt-lake was dreaming, and had drawn around her that fog as a sort of curtain to keep herself quiet, as I've heard King George and other big folks do when they go to sleep. For my part, I've no notion of such sort of sleeping, for I'd stifle to death if I had to be wrapt in every night like the Egyptian mummies that I've seen up the Straits. Give me a hammock for sleeping comfortable-like in—

I never slept out of one since I went to sea but once, and then I'd as lief have slept head downwards, for I didn't get a wink all night."

"You mean to say that you tried to sleep," said I smiling.

"Exactly — I'm no scollard, and none the worst for that, I think. Them as is born to live by head work ought to be sent to 'cadermies and colleges and such high places, — but them as have to get a living by their hands had better leave book learnin' alone, for, take my word for it, it only ends in making them rascals; and there's other ways of killing a dog without choking him to death with bread and butter. Them's my sentiments; and so when I've got to speak, instead of skulking about the business in search of big words, like the cook in the galley, I come out at once in the plain style my fathers taught me. The devil fly away with them that can't speak without shaking in their shoes lest they make a mistake. What's not expected of them can't be, and big words don't make an honest man, much less a good boatswain — the proof of the pudding is in the chewing," and the old fellow paused and looked in my face for a reply.

He had scarcely done so, when he started, looked around, and turned as pale as ashes. A low, melancholy strain, seeming to pervade the air, and coming now from above and now from some other quarter, could be distinctly heard rising solemnly across the night. The phenomenon baffled even myself, but on Hinton it had an extraordinary effect. Sailors are at all times superstitious and the bluff boatswain possessed a large share of this faculty. These singular sounds, therefore, appealed to one of the strongest feelings in his bosom. He looked at me doubtingly, turned around on tip-toe, and listened attentively a moment in every direction. His scrutiny did not satisfy him, but rather increased his wonder. There could be no doubt that the sounds existed in reality, for, although they died away for a moment now and then, they would almost instantly be heard again, apparently coming from a different quarter of the horizon. The burden of the strain could not indeed be distinguished, but I fancied I could recognize human voices in it, although I was forced to confess that I had never heard from mortal lips such exquisite melody, for as the strain rose and fell across the night, now swelling out clear and full as if sung almost at our ears, and then melting away in the distance until it died off like the faintest breathing of a wind-harp, I was tempted almost to attribute the music to angelic visitants. The old boatswain seemed to assign the sounds to the same cause, for, drawing nearer to my side, he ran his eye cautiously, and as if in awe, up to the mast-head; and then looked with a blank and puzzled gaze, in which, perhaps, some supernatural fear might be detected, into my face.

My own astonishment, however, was but momentary. Hastily scanning the horizon, I had noticed that the mist in the direction of the island had been, during the fifteen minutes that I had been idly looking over the ship's side, slowly creeping up toward us, although

in every other direction, except down in the extreme distance, the sky was as clear as before. At first, moreover, my imagination had yielded to the impression that, as the strain died away on the night, it came out again from a different quarter of the horizon; but when, divesting myself of the momentary influence of my fancy, I began to analyze the causes of this phenomenon, I became satisfied that the sounds in reality arose out of the bank of clouds, to windward, and the illusion had been produced by the rising and falling of the strair upon the night. When, therefore, the old boatswain turned to me with his baffled look, I had made up my mind as to the real causes of that which puzzled the veteran seaman.

"There is a craft up yonder in that fog," I said, pointing to windward, "and there are women on board, for the voices we hear are too sweet for those of men."

I said this with a calm smile, which at once dissipated the fear of my companion, for, after thinking a moment in silence, the puzzled expression of his face gradually cleared away, and he replied with a low laugh, which I thought, notwithstanding, a little forced:

"You are right—and that's a reason for book-larnin' I never thought of before. Here have I sailed for a matter of forty years or so, and yet I couldn't exactly come at the cause of them same sounds, when you, who haven't been ten years on the water,—though you're a smart sailor, I must say, for your years—can tell at once all about it, just because you've had a riggilar eddication. Book-larnin' ain't to be despised arter all," he continued, shaking his head, "even for a boatswain, and, by the blessing of God, I'll borrow the good book of the parson to-morrow and go at it myself; for when I was a youngster I could spell, I calculate, at the rate of a ten-knot breeze. But mayhap," he continued, his thoughts suddenly changing, "that craft up yonder may turn out a fat prize—we could soon overhaul her if the wind would only breeze up a little."

The wind, however, had now fallen to a dead calm, and the sails hung idly from the masts, while the ship rolled with a scarce perceptible motion upon the quiet sea. A current was setting in, however, to the island, and we were thus gradually borne nearer to the unseen craft. This soon became evident from the greater distinctness of the sounds, and at length I thought I could distinguish a few of the words sung, which seemed to be those of a Spanish air. As the night advanced the music ceased; but the silence did not long continue. Suddenly a shriek was heard rising fearfully on the air, followed by a strange mixture of noises, as if oaths, groans, and entreaties, and even sounds of mortal strife were all mingled in one fearful discord. The shriek was now repeated, with even more fearful vehemence; and then came the report of a pistol across the darkness. Our hearts beat with strange feelings. What nefarious deeds were being done on board the unseen craft? Hitherto the captain, who had strolled on deck to enjoy the music, had said that he should await the dawn, or at least the appearance of a breeze, before overhauling the stranger, but now he came to the determination of ~~or~~

dering out the boats, and learning the cause of those fearful outcries.

"Some hellish work, I fear," he said, "is going on yonder; perhaps a piratical boat has boarded the craft, for the villains infest these islands. Board her at every risk, and then no mercy to the fiends if they are really at their work."

The boats were hastily lowered, manned, and shoved off from the side of the ship. The second lieutenant commanded one of the boats, and to me was deputed the charge of the other. We proceeded rapidly, and as noiselessly as possible, into the bank of clouds, and soon lost sight of *THE ARROW*, although long after her hull and spars had disappeared in the obscurity, her top-light was to be seen like a red baneful star, floating in the firmament. Our guide, meanwhile, was the sounds of strife on board the invisible craft, but as we proceeded, the uproar died away, and for a few moments a profound silence reigned. Then came a few sullen plunges in the water which we were at no loss to understand. The men sprung to their oars with renewed vigor at the sounds. A perfect stillness reigned once more, but we knew, from the distinctness with which we had heard the plunges, that we were close on to the craft. Steering in the direction, therefore, from which the sounds had come, we glided along the smooth surface of the sea with almost incredible velocity. Not a word was spoken, but the oarsmen strained their sinews to the utmost, while the officers gazed intently into the gloom ahead. Each moment seemed an age. Scarcely a dozen more strokes of the oar had been given, however, when the outlines of a brig shot up, as if by magic, out of the mist ahead, and almost instantaneously a voice from the stranger hailed us in the Spanish tongue.

"Keep her to it, my lads — pull with a will," I said, as the boat, commanded by the lieutenant dashed on without heeding the hail.

"Boats a-hoy!" shouted another voice from the brig, and this time the words were in English; "lay on your oars, or we'll fire into you," and at the same time a score of heads was faintly seen crowding the bulwarks of the vessel.

"Dash into her, my brave lads!" exclaimed the lieutenant, standing up in the stern sheets and waving his sword aloft; "another yell, and we were up to them."

The men cheered in reply, and, with a jerk that made the ash blades bend like willow wands, we shot up to the sides of the brig. But not unopposed; for almost before the lieutenant had ceased speaking, the dark villains, crowding the sides of the brig, poured in a rattling fire on us that would have checked men in the pursuit of a less holy object. But the character of the assassins who had taken the brig had now become apparent, and every man of our crew, remembering that agonizing shriek, thirsted to revenge the sufferer. The volley of the pirates was not, however, as deadly as it might have been had they not been taken partially by surprise and been in consequence, without that preparation to meet us which

they otherwise would have shown. Their discharge, however, God knows, was deadly enough! The stroke oarsman, but a few feet in advance of me, fell dead, across the thwart. But the other boat, being in advance, suffered far more, for I saw several of the men stagger in their places, — while the lieutenant, springing up like a deer, tumbled headlong into the stern-sheets. He had been shot through the heart. The impetus, however, which the last gigantic stroke of the men had given to the boats, sent them onward to the brig, and we struck her side almost instantaneously with the fall of my superior.

“Vengeance!” I shouted, “vengeance, my lads! follow me!” and springing into the forechains of the brig, I leaped from thence upon her deck, and found myself, the next moment, almost unsupported amidst a circle of desperate foes. But it was only for a moment, that I was left without aid. I had scarcely exchanged the first parry with a brawny desperado, who met me at the bulwark, when my gallant fellows came pouring in after me, inflamed to double fury by the loss we had suffered, and betokening by their stern, determined looks that the approaching conflict was to be one of determination or death. The pirates, seemingly aware of their situation, glared on us with the fury of wild-beasts, and sprang with curses and yells to repel the boarders. This left me, for the instant, almost alone with my stalwart opponent, and had my cause been less righteous, or my skill at my weapon not a proverb, I should have trembled for my life. Rarely, indeed, have I seen a finer-looking or more muscular man than my opponent on that fatal night. He was a tall, sinewy Spaniard, of the pure olive complexion, with a dark, glittering, fearful eye, and a huge black mustache such as I never saw on a man before or since. His head was bare, with the exception of a red scarf, which was bound around it in the form of a turban, the ends of which depended on the left side, as I have sometimes seen them fancifully arranged by the Creole girls of the islands. His shirt-collar was thrown open, displaying a broad and brawny chest that would have served as a model for that of an athlete. His arms were bared to above the elbow, and in his hand he held a common cutlass; but a brace of huge silver-mounted pistols, and a dagger with a splendidly ornamented hilt were thrust into the scarf he wore around his waist. I forgot to mention that a small cross, the jewels of which sparkled even in the comparative darkness, depended by a rich gold chain from his neck.

I am able to give this description of him, because when we found ourselves left almost alone, we paused a moment, as men engaged in a deadly single combat will often do, before commencing our strife. I suspected at once that I was opposed to the leader of the pirates, and he seemed to feel that I held the same office among the assailants, for he gazed at me a moment, with a kind of proud satisfaction, which, however, settled down as his eye took in my comparatively slight proportions, to an expression of sneering scorn. Our pause, although sufficiently long for me to observe all this, endured but for

an instant, for the momentary admiration of my foe faded before that sneering expression, and making a blow at him with my cutlass, which he dexterously repelled, we were soon engaged in mortal combat. At first my opponent underrated my powers, but a wound which I gave him in the arm, seemed to convince him that victory would cost him an effort, and he became more wary. For several moments the conflict was only a rapid exchange of passes, during which our blades rattled and flashed incessantly; for neither of us could obtain the slightest advantage over the other. How the combatants progressed during this interval I neither knew nor cared to ascertain, for so intensely was I engrossed in my duel with the pirate-leader, that I heard nothing but the ringing of our blades, and saw only the glittering eye of my opponent. Those only who have been engaged in a deadly strife can understand the feelings of one in such a situation. Every faculty is engrossed in the struggle — the very heart seems to stand still, awaiting the end. The hand involuntarily follows the impulse of the mind, and the eye never loses sight of its destined victim. The combat had continued for several minutes, when I saw that the pirate was beginning to grow chafed, for the calm, collected expression of his eye gave place gradually to one of fury, and his lunges were made with inconceivable rapidity, and with a daring amounting to rashness. It took all my skill to protect myself, and I was forced at length to give ground. The eye of the pirate glared at his success like that of a wild beast already sure of its prey, and, becoming even more venturesome, he pressed forward and made a pass at me which I avoided with difficulty, and then only partially, for the keen blade, although averted from my heart, glanced sideways, and penetrating my arm inflicted a fearful wound. But at the time I was insensible of the injury. I felt the wound no more than if a pin had pierced me. Every thought and feeling was engrossed by the now defenseless front of my antagonist, for, as he lunged forward with his blade he lost his defense, and his bosom lay unguarded before me. Quick as lightning I shortened my blade and prepared to plunge it into the heart of the pirate. He saw his error, and made an attempt to grasp a pistol with his left hand — to ward off the blow with his sword-arm. But it was in vain. With one desperate effort I drove my blade inward — it cut through and through his half-opposed defence — and with a dull, heavy sound, went to his very heart. His eyes glared an instant more wildly than ever — his lips opened, but the faint cry was stifled ere it was half uttered — a quick, shuddering, convulsive movement passed over his face and through his frame, and, as I drew out the glittering blade, now red with the life-blood of one who, a moment before, had been in full existence, the pirate fell back dead upon the deck. At the same moment I heard a hearty cheer, and looking around, I saw that our brave fellows had gained a footing on the deck, and were driving the pirates backward toward the stern of the vessel. I now, for the first time, felt the pain of my wound. But hastily snatching the scarf from the body of my

opponent, I managed to bandage my arm so as partially to stop the blood, and hurried to head my gallant tars.

All this had not occupied three minutes, so rapid are the events of a mortal combat. I had at first thought that we had been forgotten in the excitement of the strife, but I had not been wholly unobserved, for as I stooped to snatch the scarf of the pirate, one of his followers who had seen him fall, leveled a pistol at me with a curse, but the missile was struck up by one of my men, just as it was discharged, and the ball lodged itself harmlessly in the bulwark beside me. In another instant I was again in the midst of the fight. The red scarf which I wore, however, reminding the pirates of the death of their leader, called down on me their revenge, and my appearance in the strife was a signal for a general rush upon me.

"Down with him," roared a tall, swarthy assassin, who, from his tone of authority, I judged to be the second in command; "cut him down — revenge! revenge!"

I was at that moment surrounded on two sides by the pirates, but springing back while my gallant tars raised their blades in an arch over me, I escaped the cutlasses of the foe.

"Hurl the hell-hounds to perdition," growled a veteran foretopman, as he dashed at the piratical lieutenant.

"Stand fast, all — life or death — that for your vengeance," was the response of the foe as he leveled a pistol at the breast of the gallant seaman. The ball sped on its errand, and the topman fell at my feet.

My men were now infuriated beyond all control. They dashed forward, like a torrent, sweeping every thing before them. The pirates, headed by their leader, made one or two desperate efforts to maintain their ground, but the impetuosity of their antagonists was irresistible, and the desperadoes, at first sullenly giving way, at length were forced into an indiscriminate retreat. A few of the most daring of the freebooters, however, refused to yield an inch and were cut down; while others, after flying a few paces, turned and died at bay; but with the mass the love of immediate life triumphed over the fear of an ultimate ignominious death, and they retreated to the fore-hatch, down which they were driven. A few attempted to regain the long crank boat in which they had attacked the brig from the island, but their design was anticipated by one of our fellows, who hove a brace of shot through her bottom.

I now bethought me of the female whose shriek had first alarmed us; and, advancing to the cabin, I descended with a trembling heart, anxious and yet fearing to learn the truth. I have faced death in a hundred forms — in storm, in battle, and amidst epidemics, but my nerves never trembled before or since as they did when I opened the door into the cabin. What a sight was there! Extended on the floor lay a white-haired old man, with a huge gash in his forehead, and his long silvery locks dabbled in his own gore. At his side, in a state of grief approaching to stupefaction, sat, or rather knelt, a lovely young creature who might be about seventeen, her

long golden tresses disheveled on her snowy shoulders, and her blue eyes gazing with a dry, stony look upon the face of her dead parent. Both the daughter and the father were attired with an elegance which bespoke wealth if not rank. Around her were several female slaves, filling the cabin with their lamentations, and, at intervals, vainly endeavoring to comfort their young mistress. Several books and a guitar were scattered about, and the whole apartment, though only the cabin of a common merchant-brig, had an air of feminine grace and neatness. The sight of the instruments of music almost brought the tears into my eyes. Alas! little had that lovely girl imagined, when singing her artless songs, in what misery another hour would find her.

My entrance, however, partially aroused the desolate girl. She looked up with alarm in every feature, gazed at me irresolutely a moment, and then frantically clasping the body of her murdered parent, shrunk from my approach. The negro women clustered around her, their lamentations stilled by their fears.

“You are free — thank God!” said I in a voice husky with emotion, “the murderers of your parent are avenged.”

The terrified girl looked at me with an expression which I shall never forget — an expression in which agony, joy, and doubt were all mingled into one — and then, pressing the cold body of that old man close to her bosom, she burst into a flood of tears; while her slaves, reassured by my words, resumed their noisy grief. I knew that the tears of the agonized daughter would relieve her grief, and respecting the sacredness of her sorrow, I withdrew to the deck.

Meantime, one of the crew of the brig who had managed to secrete himself from the pirates, and had thus escaped the massacre which befell indiscriminately his messmates, had come forth from his hiding-place, and related the story of their capture. I will give it, adding other matters in their place, as I learnt them subsequently from the inmates of the cabin. The brig was a coaster, and had left Havana a few days before, having for passengers an English gentleman of large fortune with his daughter and her personal slaves. They had been becalmed the preceding evening under the lee of the neighboring island, and, as the night was a fine one their passengers had remained on deck until a late hour, the daughter of Mr. Neville amusing herself with singing to her own guitar, or listening to the ruder, but yet dulcet music of her slaves. At length they had descended to the cabin, but, within a few minutes of their retirement, a large crank boat, pulled by some twenty armed piratical ruffians, had been seen coming toward the brig. Escape was impossible, and defence was useless. The feeble though desperate resistance made by the crew of a half-dozen men, was soon overcome. Mr. Neville had headed the combat, and, when the ruffians gained possession of the deck, had retreated to the cabin, barricading the entrance on the inside. But the pirates, headed by their leader, although baffled for awhile, had eventually broke through this defence and poured into the cabin: but not until several of their

number had been wounded by the desperate parent who, fighting like a lion at bay, had even fired through the door on his assailants after they had shattered it, and before it was finally broken in. At length the ruffians had gained an entrance; and a dozen swords were leveled at Mr. Neville, who still endeavored to shield his daughter. He fell — and God knows what would have been the fate of that innocent girl, if we had not at the instant reached the brig. The ruffian leader was forced to leave his prey and hasten on deck. The reader knows the rest.

When morning dawned we were still abreast of the island. By this time, however, a light breeze had sprung up, and the schooner had been brought to under the quarter of THE ARROW. My superior heard with emotion the death of his lieutenant, and expressed the determination of carrying the pirates into the neighboring port at once, and delivering them up for trial. He gave up his own cabin temporarily to the afflicted daughter, and sympathized with her sorrow, as if she had been his own child. The remains of her parent were not consigned to the deep, but allotted, on the following day, a place in consecrated ground. But I pass over the events immediately succeeding the capture of the pirates. Suffice it to say that, after a delay of three or four days in port, we found it would be impossible to have the pirates brought to trial by the tardy authorities under a month. As my presence was deemed necessary on that event, and as my superior was unwilling to delay his cruise for so long a period, it was determined then that THE ARROW should pursue her voyage, calling again at the port to take me up in the course of a month or six weeks. The next day, after this arrangement, she sailed.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXPEDITION TO THE PIRATE'S STRONGHOLD.

It was a melancholy day when the body of the murdered Mr. Neville was deposited in the burial-ground of the port of —; and if strangers shed tears at his funeral, what must have been the emotions of his orphaned daughter! All that kindness could do, however, was done to alleviate her grief; her friends crowded around her to offer consolation; and even our hardy tars showed their sympathy for her by more than one act. It was a fortunate occurrence that she had a near relative in town, and in his family accordingly she took up her residence, where she could indulge her sorrow on the bosoms of those who were united to her by natural ties, and

could sympathize with her the more sincerely because they knew the worth of which she had been deprived. It is one of the wisest dispensations of Providence that our grief should be shared and, as it were, soothed by those we love.

The pirates had no sooner been committed to prison, than endeavors were made, on the part of the authorities, to ascertain the haunt of the gang; for its depredations had been carried on during the past year to an extent that left no doubt that the prisoners formed only a detachment of a larger body, which, dividing into different parties, preyed on the commerce of the surrounding islands from as many different points. Where the head-quarters of the pirates were held was, however, unknown; as every attempt to discover them, or even to capture any of the gang had hitherto proved abortive. The authorities were, therefore, anxious to get one or more of the prisoners to reveal the retreat of their messmates on a promise of pardon; but for some time their efforts were unavailing, as each prisoner knew, that if any of the gang escaped, the life of the traitor would not be worth a moment's purchase. At length, however, the temptations held out to two of the prisoners proved irresistible, and they revealed the secret which the governor-general was so anxious to know. The head-quarters of the pirates proved to be on a small island, some leagues north of the spot where we captured the prisoners. The place was said to be admirably fortified by nature, and there was no doubt, from the prisoners' confession, that art had been called in to render the retreat impregnable.

The number of the pirates usually left behind to protect their head-quarters was said to amount to a considerable force. Notwithstanding these things, the governor-general resolved on sending a secret expedition to carry the place, and, if possible, make prisoners of the whole nest of freebooters. As, however, the spies of the gang were known to infest the town, it was necessary to carry on the preparations for the expedition with the utmost caution, so that no intelligence of the contemplated attack should reach the pirates to warn them of their danger. While, therefore, the authorities were apparently occupied with the approaching trial to the exclusion of every thing else, they were, in fact, secretly making the most active exertions to fit out an expedition for the purpose of breaking up the haunts of the gang. Several vessels were purchased, ostensibly for private purposes; and soldiers drafted into them under the cloud of night. The vessels then left the harbor, cleared for various ports with the understanding, however, that they should all rendezvous on an appointed day at a cape a few leagues distant from the retreat of the pirates. So adroitly was the affair managed, that the various vessels composing the expedition left the port unsuspected — even high officers of government, who were not admitted to the secret, regarding them merely as common merchantmen departing on their several voyages. Indeed, had an attack been contemplated on a hostile power, the preparations could not have been more secret or comprehensive. The almost incredible strength of the piratical force rendered such preparations, however, not only desirable but necessary.

I was among the few admitted to the secret, for the governor-general did me the honor to consult me on several important particulars respecting the expedition. Tired of the life of inactivity I was leading, and anxious to see the end of the adventure, I offered to accompany the enterprise as a volunteer — an offer which his excellency gladly accepted.

We set sail in a trim little brig, disguised as a merchantman; but as soon as morning dawned, and we had gained an offing, we threw off our disguise, and presented an armament of six guns on a side, with a proportionable number of men. Our craft, indeed, was the heaviest one belonging to the expedition, and all on board acquainted with her destination, were sanguine of success.

The wind proved favorable, and in less than forty-eight hours we made Capo del Istri, where the four vessels composing the expedition were to rendezvous. As we approached the promontory, we discovered one after another of the little fleet, for as we had been the last to leave port, our consorts had naturally first reached the rendezvous, and in a few minutes we hove to in the center of the squadron, hoisting a signal for the respective captains to come aboard, to consult respecting the attack.

The den of the pirates was situated at the head of a narrow strait, communicating with a lagoon of some extent, formed by the waters of a river collecting in the hollow of three hills, before they discharged themselves into the sea. Across the mouth of this lagoon was moored the hull of a dismasted ship, in such a position that her broadside commanded the entrance of the lake. Behind, the huts of the piratical settlement stretched along the shore, while the various vessels of the freebooters lay anchored in different positions in the lagoon. Such, at least, we were told, was the appearance of the place when the pirates were not absent on their expeditions.

Our plan of attack was soon arranged. It was determined to divide our forces into two divisions, so that while one party should attack the pirates in front, the other should take a more circuitous path, and penetrating by land to the back of the settlement, take the enemy in the rear. As night was already closing in, it was determined to disembark the latter party at once, so that it might proceed, under the guidance of one of the prisoners, to the position behind the enemy, and reach there, as near as possible, at the first dawn of day. It was arranged that the attack by water should commence an hour or two before day. By this means each party could reach its point of attack almost simultaneously. The onset, however, was to be first made from the water-side, and the ambuscade in the rear of the foe was not to show itself until the fight had made some progress on our side.

The men destined for the land service were accordingly mustered and set ashore, under the guidance of one of the prisoners. We watched their receding forms through the twilight until they were lost to view, when we sought our hammocks for a few hours' repose preparatory to what might be our last conflict.

The night was yet young, however, when we entered the mouth of the strait, and with a favorable breeze sailed along up toward the lagoon. The shallowness of the water in the channel had compelled us to leave our two larger craft behind and our forces were consequently crowded into the remaining vessels. Neither of these carried a broadside of weight sufficient to cope with that of the hull moored across the mouth of the lagoon.

As we advanced up the strait a deathlike stillness rested on its shadowy shores; and we had nearly reached the mouth of the lagoon before any sign betokened that the pirates were aware of our approach. We could just catch sight of the tall, rakish masts of a schooner over the low tree tops on the right, when a gun was heard in the direction of the lagoon, whether accidentally fired or not we could not tell. We listened attentively for a repetition of the sound; but it came not. Could it have been a careless discharge from our own friends in the rear of the foe, or was it a warning fired by one of the pirates' sentinels. Five or ten minutes elapsed, however, and all was silent. Meantime our vessels, with a wind free over the taffrail, were stealing almost noiselessly along the smooth surface of the strait; while the men lying close at their quarters, fully armed for the combat, breathlessly awaited the moment of attack, the intenseness of their excitement increasing as the period approached.

My own emotions I will not attempt to portray. We were already within a cable's length of the end of the strait, and in rounding-to into the lagoon, we would, if our approach had been detected, have to run the gauntlet of the broadside of the craft guarding this approach to the pirate's den — a broadside, which, if well delivered, would in all probability send us to the bottom. Our peril was indeed imminent. And the uncertainty whether our approach had been detected or not created a feeling of nervous suspense which increased our sensation of our peril.

"A minute more, and we shall shoot by the pirate," said I to the captain of our craft.

"Ay!" said he, "I have just passed the word for the men to lie down under the shelter of the bulwarks, so that if they pour a fire of musketry into us, we shall escape it as much as possible. Let us follow their example."

We sheltered ourselves just forward of the wheel-house, so that as the vessel came around on the starboard tack, no living individual was left standing on the deck, except the helmsman. The next moment, leaving the shelter of the high bank, we swept into the lagoon, and saw the dark hull of the opposing vessel moored directly across our way.

Our suspense, however, was brought to a close. We had scarcely come abreast of the enemy's broadside when, as if by magic, her port-holes were thrown open, and as the blaze of the battle-lanterns streamed across the night, her guns were run out, and instantaneously her fire was poured out from stem to stern in one continuous sheet of flame. Our mainmast went at once by the board; our hull

was fearfully cut up; and the shrieks of the wounded of our crew rose up in terrible discord as the roar of the broadside died away. But we still had headway. Springing to his feet, the captain shouted to cut away the hamper that dragged the mainmast by our side. His orders were instantly obeyed. The schooner was once more headed for the hulk, and with a loud cheer our men sprang to their guns, while our consort behind opened her fire at the same moment. Our light armament, however, was almost wholly inefficient. But happily we had not relied on it.

“Lay her aboard!” shouted the captain, “boarders away!”

At the word, amid the fire of a renewed broadside, we dashed up to the foe, and running her afoul just abaft of the main-mast, poured our exasperated men like a torrent upon her decks. I was one of the first to mount her bulwarks. Attacked thus at their very guns, the pirates rallied desperately to the defence, and a furious combat ensued. I remember striking eagerly for a moment or two in the very thickest of the fight, and then feeling a sharp pain in my side, as a pistol went off beside me. I have a faint recollection of sinking to the deck, but after that all is a void.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONFLICT AND VICTORY.

WHEN I recovered my senses, after the events narrated in the last chapter, I found that I was lying in the cabin of the schooner on board which I had been serving, while a group composed of the three surgeons and several officers of the expedition stood around me. As I opened my eyes and glanced around, scarce conscious as yet of the objects that met my gaze, one of the medical men bent over me and said that my safety depended on my quiet. Gradually I imbibed the full meaning of his words, and called to mind the events immediately preceding my fall; but, in spite of his charge, I felt an uncontrollable desire to learn the extent of my injury. In a low whisper — so low indeed that I was startled at its faintness — I asked if I was seriously wounded, and whether we had conquered. But he smiled as he replied,

“Not now, at least not in full, for your weakness forbids it. But the danger is over. The ball has been extracted. Quiet is all you now require.”

“But” said I again, “how of our expedition? Have we conquered?”

“We have, but not a word more now. To-morrow you shall hear

all. Gentlemen," he continued, turning to the group, "we had best withdraw now that our friend is past the crisis. He needs repose."

I felt the wisdom of this advice, for my brain was already whirling from the attempt to control my thoughts, even for the mere purpose of asking the questions necessary to satisfy my curiosity; so when the group left the cabin I sank back on my couch, and closing my eyes with a sense of relief, soon lost all recollection in a deep sleep, the effect, no doubt, of the opiate which had been administered to me.

When I awoke, the morning breeze was blowing freshly through the cabin, bringing with it the odors of thousands of aromatic plants from the shores of the neighboring islands, and as it wantoned across my forehead, dallying with my hair and imparting a delicious coolness to the skin, I felt an invigorating, pleasurable sensation — a sensation of the most exquisite delight — such as no one can imagine who has not felt the cool breath of morning after an illness in the close cabin of a small schooner.

My curiosity to hear the events of the combat that occurred after my fall, would not suffer me to rest, and I gave my attendants no peace until I had learned the whole.

It will be recollected that when I sunk to the deck in a state of insensibility, we were engaged in a warm contest with the piratical hulk which had been moored across the mouth of the outlet from the lagoon. The fight was maintained for some time on board of the enemy, and at first with varying success; but the daring of our men at last overcome the desperate resistance of the pirates, and the enemy were either driven below, cut down, or forced overboard. This outwork, as it were, having thus been carried, we pushed on to the settlement itself, for the other vessels moored in the lagoon were by this time deserted, the pirates having retreated to a fortification on the shore, where their whole force could act together, and where they had intrenched themselves, as they vainly imagined, in an impregnable position. But our brave fellows were not intimidated. Flush-ed with success, and burning to revenge those of their comrades who had already fallen, they cried out to be led against the desperadoes.

Accordingly, under cover of the guns of our little fleet, the men were landed, and, while a brisk fire was kept up from the vessels, the assault was made. At first the pirates stood manfully to their posts, pouring in a deadly and unremitting fire on the assailants. In vain did the officers lead on their men three several times to the assault, for three several times were they driven back by the rattling fire of the now desperate pirates. To increase the peril of their situation, no sign of their companions in the rear had as yet appeared. The ruffians were already cheering in anticipation of a speedy victory, and our men, although still burning for vengeance, were beginning to lose all hope of victory, when the long-expected rocket, announcing the arrival of the other party, shot up from the dense thicket in the rear of the fort, and instantaneously a crashing volley burst from the same quarter, followed by a long, loud cheer in which was re

recognized the battle-shout of our comrades. The sounds shivered to the very hearts of our almost dispirited men, and added new energy to their souls, and fresh vigor to their arms. Again they demanded to be led to the assault, and, with fixed bayonets, following their leader, they dashed up to the very embrasures of the fort. Then began a slaughter so terrific that the oldest veterans assured me they had never witnessed the like. Through an impervious veil of smoke, amid plunging balls and rattling grape-shot, our gallant fellows swept over the plain, through the ditch, up the embankment, and into the very heart of the fortification. At the mouths of their guns they met the pirates, bearing them bodily backward at the point of the bayonet. But if the onslaught was determined the resistance was desperate. Every step we advanced was over the dead bodies of the foemen. Throwing away their muskets they betook themselves to their pikes and cutlasses, and though forced to retreat by our overwhelming numbers, retreating sullenly, like a lion at bay, they marked their path with the blood of the assailants. Meanwhile the detachment of our troops in the rear, finding the defences in that quarter weaker than those in front, soon carried the intrenchments, and driving before it as well the immediate defenders of the walls, as the desperadoes who had hurried to reinforce them, it advanced with loud cheers to meet us in the center of the fortification. Hemmed in thus on every side, the pirates saw that further resistance was useless, and were seized with a sudden panic. Some threw down their arms and cried for quarter, others cast themselves in despair on our bayonets, while a few, managing to escape by cutting their way through a part of our line, took to the swamps in the rear of the fort, whither they defied pursuit. In less than an hour from the first assault, not a pirate was left at large within the precincts of the settlement. The huts were given to the flames, and the hulk at the outlet of the lagoon, scuttled and sunk. The other vessels were manned by our own forces, and carried away as trophies. Thus was destroyed one of the most noted piratical haunts since the days of the Buccaneers.

We learned from the prisoners that the approach of the expedition had been detected while it was yet an hour's sail from the settlement, and that preparations had instantly been made for our repulse. Had we not been under a misapprehension as to the strength of these desperadoes, and thus been induced to take with us more than double the force we should otherwise have employed, their efforts would no doubt have been successful, since the almost impregnable nature of their defenses enabled them to withstand the assault as a force four times the number of their own. It was only the opportune arrival of our comrades, and the surprise which they effected in their quarter of attack, that gave us the victory after all. As it was, our loss was terrible. We had extirpated this curse of society, but at what a price!

The wound which I had received was at first thought to be mortal, but after the extraction of the ball my case assumed a more favorable aspect. The crisis of my fate was looked for with anxiety by my

comrades in arms. My return to consciousness found them, as I have described, watching that event at my bedside.

Our voyage was soon completed, and we entered the port of — amid the salvos of the batteries, and the merry peals of the various convent bells. The governor came off to our fleet, almost before we had dropped our anchors, and bestowed rewards on the spot on those of his troops who had peculiarly distinguished themselves. He came at once to my cot, and would have carried me home to the government-house, but Mr. Neville, the uncle of the fair girl whom I had saved from the desperadoes, having attended his excellency on board, insisted that I should accept the hospitalities of his home.

“Well,” said his excellency, with a meaning smile, “I must give him up, for, as you say, mine is but a bachelor establishment, and hired nurses, however good, do not equal those who are actuated by gratitude. But I must insist that my own physician shall attend him.”

I was still too weak to take any part in this controversy, and although I made at first a feeble objection to trespassing on Mr. Neville's kindness, he only smiled in reply, and I found myself, in less than an hour, borne to his residence, without having an opportunity to expostulate.

CHAPTER VII.

CONVALESCING AND BEING LOVED.

WHAT a relief it is, when suffering with illness, to be transported from a close, dirty cabin to a large room and tidy accommodations! How soothing to a sick man are those thousand little conveniencies and delicacies which only the hand of woman can supply, and from which the sufferer on shipboard is debarred! The well aired bed-linen; the clean and tidy apartment; the flowers placed on the stand opposite the bed; the green jalousies left half-open to admit the cooling breeze; the delicious rose-water sprinkled around the room, and giving it an aromatic fragrance; and the orange, or tamarind, or other delicacy ever ready within reach to cool the fevered mouth, and remind you of the ceaseless care which thus anticipates your every want. All these, and even more, attested the kindness of my host's family. Yet every thing was done in so unobtrusive a manner that, for a long while, I was ignorant to whom I was indebted for this care. I saw no one but the nurse, the physician, and Mr. and Mrs. Neville. But I could not help fancying that there were others who sometimes visited my sick chamber, although as yet I

had never been able to detect them, except by the fresh flowers which they left every morning as evidences of their presence. More than once, on suddenly awaking from sleep, I fancied I heard a light footstep retreating behind my bed, and once I distinguished the tone of a low, sweet voice, which sounded on my ear, tired as it was of the grating accents of the nurse, like music from Paradise. Often, too, I heard, through the half-open blinds that concealed the entrance to a neighboring room, the sounds of a harp accompanied by a female voice; and, at such times, keeping my eyes closed lest I should be thought awake, and the singer thus be induced to stop, I have listened until my soul seemed fairly "lapped in Elysium." The memory of that ample apartment, with its spotless curtains and counterpanes, and the wind blowing freshly through its open jalousies, is as vivid in my memory to-day as it was in the hour when I lay there, listening to what seemed the seraphic music of that unseen performer. I hear yet that voice, so soft and yet so silvery, now rising clear as the note of a lark, and now sinking into a melody as liquid as that of flowing water, yet ever, in all its variations, sweet, and full, and enrapturing. Such a voice I used to dream of in childhood as belonging to the angels in heaven. Our dreams are not always wrong!

At length I was sufficiently recruited in strength, to be able to sit up, and I shall ever remember the delicious emotions of the hour when I first took a seat by the casement and looked out into the garden, then fragrant with the dew of the early morning. I saw the blue sky smiling overhead, I heard the low plashing of a fountain in front of my window, I inhaled the delicate perfume wafted to me by the refreshing breeze, and as I sat there, my soul ran over, as it were, with its exceeding gladness, and I almost joined my voice, from very ecstasy, with that of the birds who hopped from twig to twig, caroling their morning songs. As I sat thus looking out, I heard a light footstep on the gravel walk without, and directly the light, airy form of a young girl emerged from a secluded walk of the garden, full in my view. As she came opposite my window she looked up as if inadvertently, for, catching my eye, she blushed deeply and cast her gaze on the ground. In a moment, however, she recovered herself, and advanced in the direction she had been pursuing. The first glance at the face had revealed to me the countenance of her I had been instrumental in rescuing from the pirates. My apartment, like all those on the island, was on the ground floor, and when Miss Neville appeared she was already within a few feet of me. I rose and bowed, and noticing that she held a bunch of newly gathered flowers in her hands, I said,

"It is your taste, then, Miss Neville, which has filled the vase in my room every morning with its flowers. You can not know how thankful I am. Ah! would that all knew with what delight a sick person gazes on flowers!"

She blushed again, and extended the bouquet to me, said, with something of gayety:

"I little thought you would be up to-day, much less at so early an hour, or perhaps I might not have gathered your flowers. Since you can gaze on them from your window, they will be less attractive to you when severed, like these, from their parent stem."

"No — never," I answered, warmly; "indeed your undeserved kindness, and that of your uncle and aunt, I can never forget."

She looked at me in silence with her large, full eye, a moment ere she replied, and I could see that they grew humid as she gazed. Her voice, too, softened and sank a moment to a whisper when at length she spoke.

"Undeserved kindness! And can we ever forget," she said, "what we owe to you?"

The words, as well as the gentle tone of reproof in which they were spoken, embarrassed me for a moment, and my eyes fell beneath her gaze. As if unwilling further to trust her emotions, she turned hastily away as she finished. When I looked up, she was gone.

We met daily after this. The *ennui* of a convalescent made me look forward to the time she spent with me, as if it constituted my whole day. Certainly the room seemed less cheerful after her departure. Often would I read while she sat sewing. At other times we indulged in conversation, and I found Miss Neville's information on general subjects so extensive as sometimes to put me to the blush. She had read not only the best authors of our own language, but also those of France, and her remarks proved that she thought while she read. She was a passionate admirer of music, and herself a finished performer. For all that was beautiful in nature she had an eye and soul. There was a dash of gayety in her disposition, although, perhaps, her general character was sedate, and late events had if any thing increased its prominent trait. Her tendency to a gentle melancholy — if I may use the phrase — was perceptible in her choice of favorite songs. More than once, when listening to the simple ballads she delighted to sing, have I caught the tears rolling down my cheeks, so unconsciously had I been subdued by the pathos of her voice and song.

In a few days I was sufficiently convalescent to leave my room, and thenceforth I established myself in the one from which I had heard the mysterious music. This apartment proved to be a sort of boudoir appropriated to the use of Miss Neville, and it was her performance on the harp that I had heard during my sickness. Hers, too, had been the figure which I had seen once or twice flitting out of sight on my awaking from a fevered sleep.

It is a dangerous thing when two young persons, of different sexes, are thrown together in daily intercourse, especially when one, from his very situation, is forced to depend on the other for the amusement of hours that would otherwise hang heavily on him. The peril is increased when either party is bound to the other by any real or fancied ties of gratitude. But during the first delicious fortnight of convalescence, I was unconscious of this danger, and without taking

any thought of the future, I gave myself wholly up to the enjoyment of the hour. For Miss Neville I soon came to entertain a warm sentiment of regard, yet my feelings for her were of a far different nature from those I entertained for Annette. I did not, however, stop to analyze them, for I saw, or thought I saw, that the pleasure felt in Ellen's society was mutual, and I inquired no further. Alas! it never entered into my thoughts to ask whether, while I contented myself with friendship, she might not be yielding to a warmer sentiment. Had I been more vain, perhaps this thought might have occurred to me. But I never imagined — blind fool that I was — that this constant intercourse betwixt us could endanger the peace of either. If I could, I would have coined my heart's blood sooner than won the love which I could not return. Yet such was my destiny. My eyes were opened at length to the consequences of my indiscretion.

We had been conversing one day of the expected arrival of THE ARROW, and I had spoken enthusiastically of my profession, and, perhaps, expressed some restlessness at the inactive life I was leading, when I noticed that Ellen sighed, looked more closely at her work, and remained silent for some time. At length she raised her eyes, however, and said:

“How can you explain the passion which a seaman entertains for his ship? One would think that your hearts indulged in no other sentiment than this engrossing one.”

“You wrong us, indeed, Ellen,” I said, “for no one has a warmer heart than the sailor. But we have shared so many dangers with our ship, and it has been to us so long almost our only world, that we learn to entertain a sort of passion for it, which, I confess, seems a miracle to others, but which to us is perfectly natural. I love the old ARROW with a sentiment approaching to monomania, and yet I have many and dear friends whom I love none the less for this passion.”

I saw that her bosom heaved quicker than usual at these words, and she plied her needle with increased velocity. Had I looked more narrowly, I might have seen the color faintly coming and going in her cheek, and almost heard her heart beating in the audible silence. But I still was blind to the cause of this emotion. By some unaccountable impulse, I was led to speak of a subject which I had always avoided, though not intentionally — my early intimacy with Annette, and her subsequent rescue from the brig. Secure, as I thought, of the sympathy of my listener, and carried away by my engrossing love for Annette, I dwelt on her story for some time, totally unconscious of the effect my words were producing on Ellen. My infatuation on that morning seems now incredible. As I became more earnest with my subject, I noticed still less the growing agitation of my listener, and it was not until I was in the midst of a sentence in which I paused for words to express the loveliness of Annette's character, that I saw that Ellen was in tears. She was bending low over her work so as to conceal her agitation from my eye

CHAPTER VIII

ELLEN NEVILLE — THE TRAGEDY OF DEATH.

It was a short six months after my departure from Mr. Neville's hospitable mansion, when we came to anchor again in the port, with a couple of rich prizes, which we had taken a short time before in the Gulf-Stream. The first intelligence I heard, on landing, was that Miss Neville was said to be dying of consumption. Need I say that a pang of keenest agony shot through my heart? A something whispered to me that I was the cause, at least partially, of all this. With a faltering tongue I inquired the particulars. They were soon told. I subsequently learned more, and shall conceal nothing.

From the day when I left —, the health of Ellen had begun gradually to droop. At first her friends noticed only that she was less gay than usual, and once or twice they alluded jestingly to me as the secret of her loss of spirits. But when the expression of agony, which at such times would flit across her face, was noticed, her friends ceased their allusions. Meanwhile her health began sensibly to be affected. She ate little. She slept in fitful dozes. No amusement could drive away the settled depression which seemed to brood upon her spirits. Her friends resorted to every thing to divert her mind, but all was in vain. With a sad, sweet smile, she shook her head at their efforts, as if she felt that they could do nothing to reach her malady.

At length she caught a slight cold. She was of a northern constitution, and when this cold was followed by a permanent cough, her friends trembled lest it foreboded the presence of that disease which annually sweeps off its thousands of the beautiful and gay. Nor were they long in doubt. Their worst fears were realized. CONSUMPTION had fixed its iron clutch on her heart, and was already tugging at its life-strings. The worm was gnawing at the core of the flower and the next rough blast would sweep it from the stalk. As day by day passed, she drew nearer to the grave. Her eye grew sunken, but an unnatural luster gleamed from its depths — the hectic flush blazed on her cheek — and that dry, hacking cough, which so tortures the consumptive, while it snaps chord after chord of life, hourly grew worse.

At an early period of Ellen's illness, Mrs. Neville, who had been to the orphan girl a second mother, divined the secret of her niece's malady. She did not, however, urge her confidence on her charge

but Ellen soon saw that her aunt knew all. There was a meaning in her studied avoidance of my name, which could not be mistaken. Ellen's heart was won by this delicacy, until, one day, she revealed every thing. Mrs. Neville pressed her to her bosom at the close of the confession, and, though nothing was said, Ellen felt that the heart of her second mother bled for her.

As death drew nearer, Ellen's thoughts became gradually freed from this world. But she had still one earthly desire — she wished to see me before she died. Only to Mrs. Neville, however, was this desire confided, and even then without any expectation that it could be gratified. When, however, *THE ARROW* stopped so opportunely in —, her petitions became so urgent, that Mrs. Neville sent for me. With a sad heart I obeyed her summons.

“The dear girl,” she said, when she met me in the anteroom, “would not be denied, and, indeed, I had not the heart to refuse her. Oh! Mr. Cavendish, you will find her sadly changed. These are fearful trials which God, in his good providence, has called us to undergo,” and tears choked her further utterance. I was scarcely less affected.

It would be a fruitless task in me to attempt to describe my emotions on entering the chamber of the dying girl. I have no recollection of the furniture of the room, save that it was distinguished by the exquisite neatness and taste which always characterized Ellen. My eyes rested only on one object — the sufferer herself.

She was reclining on a couch, her head propped up with pillows, and her right hand lying listlessly on the snowy counterpane. How transparent that hand seemed with the blue veins so distinctly seen through the skin, that you could almost mark the pulsation of the blood beneath! But it was her countenance which most startled me. When I last saw her — save at that one parting interview — her mild blue orbs smiled with a sunniness that spoke the joy of a young and happy heart. Now the wild hectic of consumption blazed on her cheek, and her eyes had a brilliancy and luster that were not of earth. Then, her rich, golden tresses floated in wavy curls across her shoulders — now, that beautiful hair was gathered up under the close-fitting cap which she wore. Then her face was bright with the glow of health — alas! now it was pale and attenuated. But in place of her faded loveliness had come a more glorious beauty; and the glad smile of old had given way to one of seraphic sweetness. When she extended her wan hand toward me, and spoke in that unrivaled voice which, though feeble, was like the symphony of an *Æolian* harp, it seemed, to my excited fancy, as if an angel from heaven had welcomed me to her side.

“This is a sad meeting,” she said; for my emotions, at the sight of her changed aspect, would not permit me to speak — “but why grieve? It is all for the best. It might seem unmaidenly to some,” she continued, with a partial hesitation, while, if possible, a brighter glow deepened on her cheek, “for me thus to send for you; but

I trust we know each other's hearts, and this is no time to bow to the formalities of life. I feel that I am dying."

"Say not so, dear Ellen," I gasped, while my frame shook with agony at the ruin I had brought about, "oh! say not so. You will yet recover. God has many happy years in store for you.

"No, no," she said, touchingly, "this world is not for me; I am but a poor bruised reed—it were better I were cast aside. But weep not, for oh! I meant not to upbraid you. No, never, even in my first agony, have I blamed *you*—and it was to tell you this that I prayed I might survive. Yes! dearest—for it can not be wrong now to confess my love—I would not that you suppose I condemned you even in thought. You saved my life—and I loved you before I knew it myself. You weep—I know you do not despise me—had we met under better auspices, the result might have been—" here her voice choked with emotion—"might have been different." I could only press her hand. "Oh! this is bliss," she murmured, after a pause. "But it was not so to be," she added, in a moment, with a saddened tone, which cut me to the heart. "I should love to see her of whom you speak—she is very beautiful is she not? In heaven the angels are all beautiful." Her mind wandered. I have heard their music for days, and every day it is clearer and lovelier. Hear!" and with her finger raised, her eye fixed on the air, and a wrapt smile on her radiant countenance, she remained a moment silent.

Tears fell from us like rain. But by-and-bye her wandering senses returned, and a look of unutterable woe passed over her face. Oh! how my heart bled! I know not what I said; I only know that I strove to soothe the dying moments of that sweet saint, so suffering, yet so forgiving. A look of happiness once more lighted up her face, and with a sweet smile, she talked of happiness and heaven. As we thus communed, our hearts were melted. Gradually her voice assumed a different tone, becoming sweeter and more liquid at every word, while her eyes shone no longer with that fitful luster, but beamed on me the full effulgence of her soul once more.

"Raise me up," she said. I passed my arm around her, and gently lifted her up. Her head reposed on my shoulder, while her hand was still clasped in mine. She turned her blue eyes on me with a seraphic expression, such as only the sainted soul in its parting moment can embody, and whispered:

"Oh! to die thus is sweet! Henry, dear Henry—God bless you! In heaven there is no sorrow," and then, in incoherent sentences, she murmured of bright faces, and strange music, and glorious visions that were in the air. The dying musician said that he then knew more of God and nature than he ever knew before, and it may be that, as the soul leaves the body, we are gifted with a power to see things of which no mortal here can tell. Who knows? In our dying hour we shall learn.

The grave of Ellen is now forgotten by all, save me. The grass has grown over it for long years. But often, in the still watches of

the night, I think I hear a celestial voice whispering in my ear; and, sometimes, in my dreams, I behold a face looking, as it were, from amid the stars: and that face, all glorious in light, is as the face of that sainted girl. I can not believe that the dead return no more.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PRIVATEER.

I REMAINED but a short time in *THE ARROW* after we sailed finally from the port of——; for happening to fall in with and capture a rakish little schooner, Captain Smythe resolved to arm and send her forth to cruise against the enemy on her own account. A long Tom was accordingly mounted on a pivot amidships, a complement of men placed in her, and the command given to our second lieutenant, with myself for subordinate. Thus equipped, we parted company from our consort, who bore away for the north, while we were to cruise in the Windward Passage.

For several days we met with no adventure. The weather was intensely sultry. He who has never witnessed a noontide calm on a tropical sea can have no idea of the stifling heat of such a situation. The sea is like molten brass; no breath of air is stirring; the atmosphere is dry and parched in the mouth, and the heavens hang over all their canopy of lurid fire, in the very center of which burns with intense fierceness the meridian sun. The decks, the cabin, and the tops are alike stifling. The awnings may indeed afford a partial shelter from the vertical rays of the sun, but no breeze can be wooed down the eager windsail; while, wherever a stray beam steals to the deck through an opening in the canvas, the turpentine oozes out and boils in the heat, and the planks become as intolerable to the tread as if a furnace were beneath them.

It was on one of the hottest days of the season, and about a fortnight after we parted from *THE ARROW*, that we lay thus becalmed. The hour was high noon. I stood panting for breath by the weather railing, dressed in a thin jacket, and without a cravat, feverishly looking out across the ocean to discern, if possible, a mist, or cloud, or other evidence of an approaching breeze. My watch was in vain. There was no ripple on the deep, but a long monotonous undulation heaved the surface of the water, which glittered far and near like a mirror in which the sun is reflected vertically, paining and almost blinding the gaze. The schooner lay motionless on the ocean, the shadow of her boom shivering in the wave, as the swell undulated

along. Silence reigned on the decks. To a spectator at a distance, who could have beheld our motionless shadow in the water, we would have seemed an enchanted ship, hanging midway betwixt the sea and sky.

Noon passed, and the afternoon drew heavily along, yet still no breeze arose to gladden our listless spirits. Two bells struck, and then three, but the same monotony continued. Wearied out at length I was about turning from the weather quarter to go below, when I fancied I saw a sail far down on the horizon. I paused and looked intently in the direction where the welcome sight had been visible. For a moment the glare of the sun and the water prevented from distinguishing with any accuracy whether what I saw was really a sail or not, but at length my doubts were removed by the cry of the look-out on the forecastle, and before half an hour it became evident that the vessel to windward was a square-rigged craft, but of what size or character it was impossible to determine.

"They must have had a puff of wind up yonder," remarked the second lieutenant to me, "or else they could not have come within sight so rapidly."

"But the breeze has left them ere this," I said, "for they have not moved for the last quarter-of-an-hour."

"We shall probably know nothing more of them until nightfall, for the wind will scarcely make before sunset, even if it does then. He has the weather-gage. Until I know something more of him I would rather change positions."

"He is some fat merchantman," I replied, "we will lighten his plethoric pocket before morning."

During the afternoon the calm continued, our craft and the stray sail occupying their relative positions. Meantime, innumerable were the conjectures which we hazarded as to the character of our neighbor; and again and again were our glasses put in requisition to see if any thing could be discovered to decide our conflicting opinions. But the royals of a ship, when nothing else of her is visible, give scarcely any clue as to her character; and accordingly, hour after hour passed away, and we were still altogether ignorant respecting the flag and strength of our neighbor. Toward sunset however, signs of a coming breeze began to appear on the sea-board, and when the luminary wheeled his disk down the western line of the horizon, the sea to windward was perceptibly ruffled by the wind.

"Ah! there it comes at last—" said the second lieutenant, "and, by my halidom, the stranger is standing for us. Now, if he will only keep in his present mind until we can get within range of him, I am no officer of the United Colonies if I do not give him some hot work. By St. George, the men have had so little to do of late, and they long so eagerly to whet their palates, that I would venture to attack almost twice our force—eh! Cavendish! You have had such a dare-devil brush with the buccaneers lately, that I suppose you think no common enemy is worth a thought."

"Not altogether," said I, "but I think we shall have our wish

gratified. Yonder chap is certainly twice our size, and he carries his topsails as jauntily as a man-of-war."

"Faith! and you're right, Harry," said my old messmate, as he shut the glass with a jerk, after having, in consequence of my last remark, taken a long look at the strange sail, "that's no sleepy merchantman to windward. But we'll swagger up to him, nevertheless; one doesn't like to run away from the first ship he meets."

I could not help smiling when I thought of the excuses with which the lieutenant was endeavoring to justify to himself his contemplated attack on a craft that was not only more than twice our size, but apparently an armed cruiser, for I knew the case would have been the same if this had been the hundredth, instead of the first vessel he had met after assuming a separate command, as no man in the corvette had been more notorious for the recklessness with which he invited danger. Perhaps this was the fault of his character. I really believe he would, if dared to it, have run into Portsmouth itself, and fired on the British fleet at anchor. In our former days, when we had been fellow-officers on board *THE ARROW*, we had often differed on this trait in his character, and perhaps now he felt called on, from a consciousness of my opinion, to make some excuse to me for his disregard of prudence in approaching the stranger; for, as soon as the breeze had made, he had close-hauled the schooner, and, during the conversation I have recorded, we were dashing rapidly up toward the approaching ship.

As we drew nearer to the stranger, my worst suspicions became realized. Her courses loomed up large and ominous, and directly her hammock-nettings appeared, and then her ports opened to our view, six on a side; while, almost simultaneously with our discovery of her force, a roll of bunting shot up to her gaff, and, unrolling, disclosed the cross of St. George. There was now no escape. The enemy had the weather-gage, and was almost within closing distance. However prudent a more wary approach might have been hitherto, there was no longer any reason for the exercise of caution. It would be impossible for us now to avoid a combat, or get to windward by any manœuvre; and to have attempted to escape by going off before the wind would have been madness, since of all points of sailing that was the worst for our little craft. Gloomy, therefore, as the prospect appeared for us, there was no hesitation, but each man, as the drum called us to quarters, hurried to his post with as much alacrity as if we were about to engage an inferior force, instead of one so overwhelmingly our superior.

The moon had by this time risen, and was calmly sailing on, far up in the blue ether, silvering the deep with her gentle radiance, and showering a flood of sparkles on every billowy crest that rolled up and shivered in her light. Everywhere objects were discernible with as much distinctness as under the noonday sun. The breeze sang through our rigging with a joyous sound, singularly pleasing after the silence and monotony of the day; and the waves that parted beneath our cut-water rolled glittering astern along our sides,

while ever and anon some billow, larger than its fellows, broke over the bow, sending its foam crackling back to the foremast. Around the deck our men were gathered, each one beside his allotted gun, silently awaiting the moment of attack. The cutlasses had been served out; the boarding-pikes and muskets were placed convenient for use; the balls had already been brought on deck, and we only waited for some demonstration on the part of the foe to open our magazine and commence the combat in earnest. At length, when we were rapidly closing with him, the enemy yawed, and directly a shot whistled high over us.

"Too lofty, by far, old jackanapes," said the captain of our long Tom, "we'll pepper you after a different fashion when it comes to our turn to serve out the iron potatoes. Ah! the skipper's tired of being silent," he continued, as Mr. Vinton ordered the old veteran to discharge his favorite piece; "we'll soon see who can play at chuck-farthing the best, my hearty. Bowse away, boys, with that rammer — now we have her in a line — a little lower, just a trifle more — that's it — there she goes;" and as he applied the match, the flame streamed from the mouth of the gun, a sharp, quick report followed, and the smoke, clinging a moment around the piece in a white mass, broke into fragments and eddied away to leeward on the gale; while the old veteran, stepping hastily aside, placed his hands over his eyes, and gazed after the shot, with an expression of intense curiosity stamped on every feature of his face. Directly an exulting smile broke over his countenance, as the foretopsail of the ship fell — the ball having hit the yard.

"By the holy and true cross," said a mercurial Irishman of the old veteran's crew, "but he has it there — hurrah! Give it to him nately again — it's the early thrush that catches the early worm."

"Home with the ball there, my hearties," sung out the elated veteran, "she is yawing to let drive at us — there it comes. Give her as good as she sends."

The enemy was still, however, at too great a distance to render her fire dangerous, and after a third shot had been exchanged betwixt us — for the stranger appeared to have, like ourselves, but a single long gun of any weight — this distant and uncertain firing ceased, and both craft drew steadily toward each other, determined to fight the combat as a gallant combat should be fought, — yard-arm to yard-arm.

The wind had now freshened considerably, and we made our way through the water at the rate of six knots an hour. This soon brought us on the bow of the foe. Our guns, meanwhile, had been hastily shifted from the starboard to the larboard side, so that our whole armament could be brought to bear at once on the ship. As we drew up toward the enemy a profound silence reigned on our deck — each man, as he stood at his gun, watching her with curious interest. We could see that her decks were filled with defenders, and that marksmen had been posted in the tops to pick off our crew. But no eye quailed, no nerve flinched, as we looked on this formida-

able array. We felt that nothing was left but to fight, since flight was alike dishonorable and impossible.

At length we were within pistol-shot of the foe, and drawing close on to his bows. The critical moment had come. That indefinable feeling which even a brave man will feel when about engaging in a mortal combat, shot through our frames as we saw that our bowsprit was overlapping that of the enemy, and knew that in another minute some of us would perhaps be in another world. But there was little time for such reflections now. The two vessels, each going on a different tack, rapidly shot by each other, and, in less time than I have taken to describe it, we lay broadside to broadside, with our bows on the stern of the foe, and our taffrail opposite his foremast. Until now not a word had been spoken on board either ship; but the moment the command to fire was passed from gun to gun, a sheet of flame instantaneously rolled along our sides, making our light craft quiver in every timber. The rending of timbers, the crash of spars, and the shrieks of the wounded, heard over even the roar of battle, told us that the iron missiles had sped home, bearing destruction with them. A momentary pause ensued, as if the crew of the enemy had been thrown into a temporary disorder — and then came in return the broadside of the foe. Our men had lain flat on the deck after our discharge, since our low bulwarks afforded scarcely any protection against the fire of the enemy, and when, therefore, his broadside came hurling upon us, the number of our wounded was far less than under other circumstances would have been possible.

“Thank God! the first broadside is over,” I involuntarily exclaimed, “and we have the best of it.”

“Huzza! we’ll whip him yet, my hearties,” shouted the captain of our long Tom; “give it to him with a will now — pepper his supper well for him. Old Marblehead, after all, against the world!”

“Out with her — ay! there she has it,” shouted a grim veteran in my division; “down with the rascally Britisher.”

“Huzza for St George,” came hoarsely back in reply, as the roar of the gun died on the air, and, at the words, a ball whizzed over my shoulders, and striking a poor fellow behind me on the neck, cut the head off at the shoulders, and while it bore the skull with it in its flight, left the headless trunk spouting its blood, as if from the jet of an engine, over the decks. I turned away sickened from the sight. The messmates of the murdered man saw the horrid sight, but they said nothing, although the terrible energy with which they jerked out the gun, told the fierceness of their revengeful feelings. Well did their ball do its mission; for as the smoke eddied momentarily away from the decks of the enemy, I saw the missile dismount the gun which had fired the last deadly shot, scattering the fragments wildly about, while the appalling shrieks which followed the accident told that more than one of the foe had suffered by that fatal ball.

“We’ve revenged poor Jack, my lads,” said the captain of the

gun,—“away with her again. A few more such shots and the day's our own.”

The guns on either side were plied with fearful rapidity and precision. Our craft was beginning to be dreadfully cut up; we had received a shot in the foremast that threatened momentarily to bring it down, and at every discharge of the enemy's guns one or more of our little crew fell wounded at his post. But if we suffered so severely it was evident that we had our revenge on the foe. Already his mizzen-mast had gone by the board, and two of his guns were dismounted. I fancied once or twice that his fire slackened, but the dense canopy of smoke that shrouded his decks and hung on the face of the water prevented me from observing, with any certainty, the full extent of the damage we had done to the enemy.

For some minutes longer the conflict continued with unabated vigor on the part of our crew; but at the end of that period, the fire of the Englishman sensibly slackened. I could scarcely believe that our success had been so decisive, but, in a few minutes longer, the guns of the enemy were altogether silenced, and directly afterward a voice hailed from him, saying that he had surrendered. The announcement was met by a loud cheer from our brave tars, and, as the two vessels had now fallen a considerable distance apart, the second lieutenant determined to send a boat on board to take possession. Accordingly, with a crew of about a dozen men, I pushed off from the sides of our battered craft.

As we drew out of the smoke of the battle we began to see the real extent of the damage we had done. The ship of the enemy lay an almost perfect wreck on the water, her foremast and mizzen-mast having both fallen over her side; while her hull was pierced in a continuous line, just above water-mark, with our balls. Here and there her bulwarks had been driven in, and her whole appearance betokened the accuracy of our aim. I turned to look at the schooner. She was scarcely in a better condition, for the foremast had by this time given way, and her whole larboard side was riddled with the enemy's shot. A dark red stream was pouring out from her scuppers, just abaft the mainmast. Alas! I well knew how terrible had been the slaughter in that particular spot. I turned my eyes from the melancholy spectacle, and looked upward to the calm moon sailing in the clear azure sky far overhead. The placid countenance of the planet seemed to speak a reproof on the angry passions of man. A moment afterward we reached the captured ship.

As I stepped on deck I noticed that not one solitary individual was to be seen. The whole crew had apparently retreated below. At this instant, however, a head appeared above the hatchway and instantly vanished. I was not long in doubt as to the meaning of this strange conduct, for, almost immediately a score of armed men rushed up the hatchway, and advancing toward us demanded our surrender. I saw at once the dishonorable stratagem. Stung to madness by the perfidy of the enemy, I sprang back a few steps to

my men, and rallying them around me, bid the foe come on. They rushed instantly upon us, and in a moment we were engaged in as desperate a *melee* as ever I had seen.

"Stand fast, my brave lads," I cried, "give not an inch to the cowardly and perfidious villains."

"Cut him down and sweep them from the decks," cried the leader of the men, stung by the taunt of cowardice.

A brawny desperado at the words made a blow at me with his cutlass, but hastily warding it off I snatched a pistol from my belt, and fired at my antagonist, who fell dead to the deck. The next instant the combat became general. Man to man, and foot to foot, we fought, desperately contesting every inch of deck, each party being conscious that the struggle was one of life or death. The clashing of cutlasses, the crack of fire-arms, the oaths, the shouts, the bravado, the shrieks of the wounded, and the dull heavy fall of the dead on the deck, were the only sounds of which we were conscious during that terrible *melee*, and these came to our ears not in their usual distinctness, but mingled into one fearful and indescribable uproar. For myself, I scarcely heard the tumult. My whole being was occupied in defending myself against an herculean ruffian who seemed to have singled me out from my crew, and whom it required all my skill at my weapon to keep at bay. I saw nothing but the ferocious eye of my adversary; I heard only the quick rattle of our blades. I have said once before that my proficiency at my weapon had passed into a proverb with my messmates, and had I not been such a master of my art, I should, on the present occasion, have fallen a victim to my antagonist. As it was, I received a sharp wound in the arm, and was so hotly pressed by my vigorous foe that I was forced to give way. But this temporary triumph proved the destruction of my antagonist. Flushed with success, he forgot his weariness, and made a lunge at me which left him unprotected. I moved quickly aside, and, seizing my advantage, had buried my steel in his heart before his own sword had lost the impetus given to it by his arm. As I drew out the reeking blade, I became aware, for the first time, of the wild tumult of sounds around me. A hasty glance assured me that we barely maintained our ground, while several of my brave fellows lay on the deck wounded or dying but before I could see whether the ranks of the foe had been equally thinned, and while yet scarcely an instant had passed since the fall of my antagonist, a loud, clear huzza, swelling over the din of the conflict, rose at my side, and, turning quickly around, I saw to my joy that the shout proceeded from a dozen of our tars who had reached us at that moment in a boat from the schooner. In an instant they were on deck.

"Down with the traitors — no quarter — hew them to the deck," shouted our indignant messmates as they dashed on the assailants. But the enemy did not wait to try the issue of the combat. Seized with a sudden panic, they fled in all directions, a few jumping overboard, but most of them tumbling headlong down the hatchways.

We were now masters of the deck. As I instantly guessed, the report of the firearms had been heard on board the schooner, when, suspecting foul play, a boat had instantly pushed off to our rescue.

"Your arrival was most opportune," said I, "a few minutes later and it would have been of no avail." And then, as I ran my eye over our comparatively gigantic foe, I could not restrain the remark: "It is a wonder to me how we conquered."

"Faith, and you may well say that," laughingly rejoined my messmate; "it will be something to talk of hereafter. But the schooner hasn't come off," he added, glancing at our craft, "without the marks of this fellow's teeth. But I had forgot to ask who or what the rascal is."

The prize proved to be a privateer. She had received so many shots in her hull, and was already leaking so fast, that we concluded to remove the prisoners and blow her up. Her crew were accordingly ordered one by one on deck, handcuffed, and transported to the schooner. Then I laid a train, lighted it and put off from the prize. Before I reached our craft — which by this time had been removed to some distance — the ship blew up.

We rigged a jury-mast, and by its aid reached Charleston, where we tacked. Our capture gave us no little reputation, and while we remained in port we were lionized to our hearts' content.

Eager, however, to continue the career so gloriously begun, we staid at Charleston no longer than was absolutely necessary to repair our damages. In less than a fortnight we left the harbor, and made sail again for the south.

CHAPTER X

THE LEE SHORE.

"All hands ahoy!" rang through the ship, as the shrill whistle of the boatswain awoke me from a pleasant dream. I started, hastily, threw on my monkey-jacket, and in a minute was on deck.

The winter sun had set clear, without a cloud to fleck the heavens, and when I went below at midnight, leaving the starboard watch in possession of the deck, the cold, bright stars were out, twinkling in the frosty sky; while a capful of wind was sending us merrily along. Six bells had just struck as I sprang up the gangway, and the night was still clear above, but, casting my eye hurriedly around, I saw a bank of mist, close on the starboard bow, driving rapidly for us, and covering sea and sky in that quarter, in a shadowy veil. The men were already at their posts, and as my watch came tumbling on deck

each member of it sprang to aid his messmates, so that in less time than I have taken to describe it, we had got the light sails in, and kept away the schooner a few points, and were ready to let every thing go by the run, if necessary, as soon as the squall struck us. Nor did we wait long for the unwelcome visitor. Scarcely had our craft been made snug before the squall burst on us in a whirlwind of snow, hail, rain, and wind, against whose fury it was, for the moment, impossible to stand. As the gale struck the schooner, she heeled over until her decks were fearfully inclined, while the tall masts bent like rushes in the tempest, and the spars strained and cracked as if they were unequal to the torture. For a moment I thought that all was over, and clutching a rope I made ready to spring to windward as soon as she should capsize; but after a second of breathless uncertainty she slightly recovered herself, and dashed forward as if she had been shot like an arrow from the bow, her whole forward part buried in the foam that boiled around her bows, and flew high up the masts in showers. All this time the wind was shrieking through the hamper with an intonation like that of a tortured fiend; while the hail and snow driving horizontally against the men fairly pinned them to their stations. The ropes soon became coated with ice, while the cold grew intense, so that it was with difficulty we could get the fore and main sails reefed. At length, however, we stripped her to the fight, when she rose until nearly level, bearing gallantly up against the gale. Meantime, the snow fell thick and fast, covering the decks with its white carpeting, and dressing the shrouds, booms, and the weather side of the masts in the garments of the grave.

"Whew! what a flurry! Old Davy himself has laid hold of the bellows to-night," said the captain of the starboard watch, stooping before the gale and turning his back to windward; why it blows as if it would whiff our little craft away, like a feather, before it. By the gods, but that bucket full of hail that has just rattled on my shoulders was enough to have felled an ox. It must be as black as the ace of spades to windward — hark! how the infernal sleet sings in the rigging."

"How long was the squall coming up?" said I as soon as the roar of the elements suffered me to speak, for it was only in the occasional pauses in the gale, that I could hope to be heard.

"It came up like a pet in a woman — one moment her face is all smiles, the next black as a thunder-cloud. When five bells struck, the sky was as clear as a kitten's eye, and now you can't see a fathom over the starboard bow; while we are driving along here like a chip in a mill-race, or a land-bird caught by a nor'wester. Whistle, whistle — howl, howl, why it blows as if the devil himself was working the bellows up to windward."

I could not help smiling at my messmate's energy, and as he closed I looked thoughtlessly over the starboard quarter, when a wild dash of sleet right in my face, stinging as if ten thousands nettles had struck me, forced me to turn my back on the storm more rapidly than I had faced it.

"It is as sharp as a razor," I ejaculated, when I recovered my breath, "cuts to the bone. But let me see, Mr. Merrivale," said I, approaching the binnacle, "this squall must be from the northeast. Ay! not a point either way. It's a lucky thing we have a good offing. I wouldn't be on the coast now for a year's pay."

"It would be an ugly berth," said Merrivale, shaking the sleet from his hair, "I've no notion of being jammed up like a rat in a corner, with a lee shore on one side, and a wind blowing great guns on the other, while one's only chance is to hug the gale under a crowd of canvas that threatens to snap your masts off as I could a pipe-stem. No, thank God! we're far at sea!"

The words had scarcely left his mouth, and I was as yet unable to answer, when a strange, booming sound, over the larboard bow, smote on my ear, thrilling through every nerve; while at the same instant, the look-out shouted, in sharp, quick tones,

"Breakers ahead!"

For an instant there was an ominous silence, while even the tempest seemed to die momentarily away. No one who has not heard that fearful cry on a lee shore, when surrounded by darkness, can have any notion of our feelings. Each man held his breath, and turned his ear anxiously to leeward. In that awful second what varied emotions rushed through our minds, as we heard, rising distinctly over the partial lull of tempest, the hoarse roar of the surf, apparently close under our lee.

"Port — a-port — jam her close to the wind," almost shrieked Merrivale, the energy of his character, in the moment of peril, divesting him of his usual prolixity.

"Port it is," answered the man at the helm, as the sheets came rattling in and the schooner flew to windward, shivering the opposing wave to atoms, and sending the foam crackling in showers over the forecastle. As she answered to her helm, we caught sight, through the shadowy tempest, of the white breakers boiling under our lee; and an ejaculation of heartfelt gratitude broke involuntarily from my lips, when, a moment after, I saw the ghastly line of foam glancing astern.

"Thank God!" echoed Merrivale; "another instant of delay and we should have struck. But how could we have made such a mistake in our reckoning? Where are we?"

"We are off the Jersey coast, somewhere between Egg Harbor and Barnegat," I answered, "but I thought we were at least twenty leagues at sea. How gallantly the old craft staggers to windward — she will yet weather the danger."

The exertions of the schooner were indeed noble. With her nose close down to the tempest, and her masts bending before the fierce hurricane that whistled along her canvas, she thrashed her way to windward, now doggedly climbing up an opposing billow, and now thumping through the head sea, scattering the foam on either side her path, her timbers quivering and groaning in the desperate encounter. One moment the parted wave whizzed along the side,

glittering with spectral brilliancy; and again, the wild spray went hissing by in the air, drenching the decks with water. Now, a huge billow striking on her bows, with the force of a dozen forge-hammers, staggered her momentarily in her course; and now, shaking the water proudly from her, she addressed herself again to her task and struggled up the wave. Thus battling against sea, storm, and hurricane she held on her way, like a strong man fighting through a host.

Every officer as well as man was now on deck, and each one, fully sensible of our danger, watched, with eager eyes through the gloom to distinguish whether we gained ground in our desperate encounter. For an instant, perhaps, as the darkness hid the breakers from sight, or their roar came fainter to the ear in the increasing fury of the gale, we would fancy that our distance from the surf was slowly increasing; but as often, when the gale lulled, or the darkness on our lee broke partially away, our hearts sank within us at the conviction that our peril still continued as imminent as ever, and that the struggles of our gallant craft had been in vain. Meantime, the hurricane grew wilder and fiercer, and at length we saw that we were losing ground. The schooner still battled with a spirit as undaunted as before against her combined enemies, but she labored more and more at every opposing wave, as if fast wearing out in the conflict.

"We must crowd the canvas on her," said the skipper, after a long and anxious gaze on the shore under the lee; "if we strike out here, a mile at least from land, we shall all be lost. Better, then, jerk the mast out of her in clawing off?"

The order was accordingly given to take a reef out of the fore and main sail, and, after a desperate struggle with the canvas, the men succeeded in executing their duty. When our craft felt the increased sail, she started nervously forward, burying herself so deeply in the head sea that I feared she would never emerge, while every rope, shroud, and timber in her cracked in the strain. At length, however, she rose from the surge, and rolled heavily to windward, slowly shaking from her the tons of water that had pressed on her decks and buried every thing forward in the deluge. With another partial check, and another desperate, but successful struggle, we breathed more freely. Yet there still came to our ears the sullen roar of the breakers on our lee, warning us that peril was yet imminent.

"Hark!" suddenly said Merrivale, "surely I heard a cannon. There is some craft nigh, even more dangerously situated than ourselves."

"And there goes the flash!" I exclaimed, pointing ahead, while simultaneously the boom of a signal-gun rose on the night. "God help them, they are driving on the breakers," I added, as another flash lit up, for a moment, the scene before us, revealing a dismantled ship flying wildly before the tempest.

"They are whirling down to us with the speed of a racer — we shall strike!" ejaculated Merrivale.

As he spoke, the shadowy ship emerged from the tempest of snow and sleet, not a pistol-shot from our bow. Never shall I forget the appearance of that spectral craft. She had no mast remaining, except the stump of the mizzen. From her size we knew her to be a sloop-of-war. So far as we could see through the obscurity, her decks were crowded with human beings, some apparently stupefied, some in the attitude of supplication, and some giving way to uncontrollable frenzy. As all power over her had been lost, she was driving directly before the tempest. The time that was consumed in these observations occupied but an instant, for the darkness of the storm was so dense that the eye could not penetrate the gloom more than a few fathoms; and a period scarcely sufficient for a breath elapsed from the first discovery of the ship before we saw that ere another instant she would come in contact with us. Already she was in fearful proximity to our bows. The danger was perceived by us and by the crew of the dismantled ship at the same moment, and a wild cry rose up which drowned even the frenzied tempest. Escape seemed impossible. We were between two dangers, to one of which we must fall a prey. Our only chance of avoiding the breakers was to keep our craft close to the wind, while, by so doing, a collision appeared inevitable. Yet a single chance remained.

"Jam her up!" shouted the skipper, catching at the only hope; "ay! hard down till she shivers."

We held our breath for the second that ensued. So close had the ship approached, that I could have pitched a biscuit on her decks. Her bowsprit already threatened to come into collision with our bows, and involuntarily I grasped a rope, expecting the next instant to be at the mercy of the waves. On — on — she came, her huge hull, as it rose on the wave, fearfully overtopping our own, and threatening, at the first shock, to crush us. A second and wilder cry of agony burst from every lip, but, at that instant, she swerved, what seemed a hair's breadth, to one side, her bowsprit grazed ours in passing, and she whirled by like a bird on the wing.

The scene did not occupy a minute. So sudden had been the appearance of the ship, so imminent had been our peril, and so rapidly had the moment of danger come and gone, that the whole occurrence seemed to me like a dream; and when, after a second's delay, the ill-fated ship passed away into the darkness under our lee, and the shrieks of her crew were lost in the uproar of the gale, I almost doubted whether what we had just beheld had been real. But a glance at the faces of my messmates dissipated my incredulity, for on every countenance was written the history of the few last moments of agonizing suspense. A profound silence, meanwhile, reigned on our decks, every eye being strained after the drowning man-of-war. At length Merrivale spoke:

"It is a miracle how we escaped," and then in a sadder tone he added, "the Lord have mercy on all on board yonder ship. But hark!" he suddenly exclaimed, and a wild, thrilling cry, as if a hundred voices had united in a shriek of agony, struggled up from seaward.

Years have passed since then, and the hair that was once fair has now turned to gray, but that awful sound yet rings in my ears; and often since have I started from my sleep, fancying that I saw again that spectral ship flitting by through the gloom, or heard that cry of agony drowning, for the moment, the raging tempest. Our blood curdled at the sound, and we gazed into each other's faces with horror on every line of countenance. More than a minute elapsed before a word was said; and, during the interval, we sought to catch a repetition of the cry, however faint; but only the singing of the sleet through the hamper, the whistle of the hurricane overhead, and the wild roar of the breakers under our lee, came to our ears. No further token of that ill-fated ship ever reached us. Not a living soul, of the hundreds who had crowded her deck when she whirled across our course, landed on that coast. With all their sins on their heads, afar from those they loved and by whom they were loved in return, her crew went down into the deep, "unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

When that wintry storm had passed away, the timbers of a wreck were found strewn the inhospitable shore, with here and there a dead body clinging to a fragment of a spar, but neither man nor child survived to tell how agonizingly they struggled against their fate, to practice the information which they had promised in their hour of bitter need. And when the summer sun came forth, kissing the bright waters of the Atlantic, and children laughingly gathered shells along the shore, who would have thought that, a few months before, the heavens had looked down, in that very spot, on the wild struggles of the dying? But I pass on.

At length that weary night wore away, and when morning dawned, we saw the full extent of the danger we had escaped. All along the coast, at a distance of more than a mile from the shore, stretched a narrow shoal, over which the breakers were now boiling as in a raelstrom. It needed no prophet to foretell our fate, had we struck amid this surf. No boat could have lived in that raging sea, and our frail craft would have been racked to pieces in less than half an hour. Nothing but the energy of the skipper in crowding the canvas on the schooner, though at the imminent hazard of carrying away the masts, and thus insuring certain destruction, enabled us to escape the doom which befell the ill-fated man-of-war.

CHAPTER XI

THE BRIDE OF POMFRET HALL

IN a few days we made Block Island, and hauled up for Newport, where we expected to meet *THE ARROW*. It was a beautiful day in winter when we entered the outer harbor, and the waves which a light frosty breeze just rippled, glittered in the sunlight as if the surface of the water had been strewn with diamonds. The church-bells were merrily ringing in honor of the intelligence, which had just been received, of the alliance with France. We came to anchor amid a salvo from the batteries of the fort, and of our consort who was already at anchor in the inner harbor.

Merry was our meeting with the ward-room and cock-pit of *THE ARROW*, and many a gay sally bore witness to the hilarity with which we greeted each other after our mutual adventures. For a week, the town rung with our mirth. At the end of that time, I managed to obtain leave of absence, and, remembering my promise to Mr. St. Claire, started for Pomfret Hall. As I lay back in the coach, and was whirled over the road behind two fast hackneys, I indulged in many a recollection of the past, in not a few reveries over the future. But most of all, I wondered how Annette would receive me. The thoughts of our last parting were fresh in my memory, but months of changes had since elapsed, and might not corresponding changes have occurred in her feelings toward me? Would she meet me with the delightful frankness of our childhood, or with the trembling embarrassment of our few last interviews? Or might she not, perhaps, as too many before had done, welcome me with a cold politeness that would be more dreadful to me than even scorn? The longer I thought of the subject, the more uncertainty I felt as to my reception. At first I had pictured to myself Annette, standing blushing and embarrassed on the steps, to greet me as soon as I alighted; but when I came to reflect, I felt that, like all lovers, I had dreamed impossibilities; and I almost laughed at my wild vision when I recalled to my mind that I stood in no other light to Annette than as an acquaintance, at most as a friend. My feelings then took a sudden revulsion, and I asked myself, might not she love another? What had I ever said to induce her to believe that I loved her? Could she be expected to give her affections, unasked, to any one, but especially to a poor adventurer, whose only fortune was his sword, when the proudest of the land would consider her hand as a boon? What madness to think that, surrounded as she doubtless

had been by suitors, her heart before this had not been given to another ! As I thought this, I fancied that I was going only to behold the triumph of some more fortunate rival, and I cursed myself for having come on such an errand. At one moment I was almost resolved to turn back. But again hope dawned in my bosom. I felt that Annette must have seen my love, and I recalled to mind how tremblingly alive she had been, during our last interview, to my attentions. Surely, then, she had not forgotten me. I was doing her injustice, and with this conviction, I leaned out of the carriage window, and ordered the postillion to drive faster.

The second day brought me in sight of the gates of Pomfret Hall, and as I dashed up to them, and felt that my suspense would soon be terminated, my heart fluttered wildly. As the carriage whirled into the avenue, I saw a procession of the neighboring village girls proceeding to the hall. They were dressed in white, and bore flowers, as if going to some festival. At that instant I recollected that the church-bells had been ringing merrily ever since I came within hearing of them, and, with a sudden thrill of agony, I stopped the coach as the village girls stepped aside to let it pass, and inquired the meaning of their procession. My voice was so husky that, at first, it was indistinguishable; and I was forced to repeat the question.

"Oh ! it's the meaning of our going to the hall, that the gentleman would know," said a female at the head of the procession; then turning to me she said, with a courtesy. "The young mistress was married this morning, and we are going to the hall to present her with flowers. This is her school, sir, and I am the mistress."

I sank back in the carriage with a groan. At first I thought of ordering the postillion to return, but then I resolved to go forward, and, concealing my sufferings, appear the gayest of the gay.

"Yes !" I exclaimed, in bitter agony, "never shall she know the misery she has inflicted. And yet, O God ! that Annette should thus have deserted me —" and with these words, I sternly bid the postillion drive on. But I felt like a criminal bound to his execution.

The ten minutes that elapsed before I reached the door of the Hall seemed to be protracted to an age, and were spent in an agony of mind no pen can describe. Oh ! to be thus deceived — to part from Annette as we had parted — to think of her by day, and dream of her by night — to look forward to our meeting with a thrill of hope and strive to win renown that I might shed a luster around my bride — and then, after all my toils, and hopes, and struggles, to come back and find her wedded — God of heaven ! it was too much. But, notwithstanding my agony, my pride revolted at the display of any outward emotion. I would not for worlds that Annette should know the torture her faithlessness had inflicted on my bosom. No ! I would smooth my brow, subdue my tongue, and control my every look. I would jest, smile, and be the gayest of the gay. I would wish Annette and her husband a long and happy life, and no one

should suspect that, under my assumed composure, I wore a heart rankling with a wound that no time nor circumstance could cure. I resolved to see Annette, to play my part to the end, and then, returning to my post, to find an honorable death on the first deck we should surmount. My reflections, however, were cut short by the stoppage of the vehicle before the door of the mansion. A servant hastened to undo the coach-steps, and, nerving myself for the interview that was at hand I stepped out. The man's face was strange to me, and I saw that it displayed some embarrassment.

"Will you announce me to Mr. St. Clair," I said, "as Lieutenant Cavendish?"

"Mr. St. Clair, I regret to say," replied the man politely, "is not at the Hall. The carriages have just driven off, and if they had not taken the back road through the park, would have met you in the avenue. Mr. St. Clair accompanies the bride and groom on a two weeks' tour."

My course was at once taken; and, as the criminal feels a lightening of the heart when reprieved, so I experienced a relief in escaping the trying experiment of mingling with the bridal party. Hastily reascending the carriage steps, I left my name with the servant, and ordering the coachman to drive off, left Pomfret Hall, with the resolution never again to return. At the village I paused a few minutes to indite a letter to Mr. St. Clair, in which I regretted my inopportune arrival, and wished a long life of happiness to him and to Annette. Then, re-entering the coach, I threw myself back on the seat, and, while I was being whirled away from Pomfret Hall, gave myself up to the most bitter reflections. As I now and then looked out of the window and recognized familiar objects along the road, I contrasted my present despondency with the hope that had thrilled my heart when I passed them a few hours before. Then, every pulse beat faster with delicious anticipations; now, I scarcely wished for more than an honorable death. At length my thoughts took a turn, and I reviewed the past, calling to mind every little word and act of Annette, from which I could draw either hope or despair.

"Fool that I was," I exclaimed, "to think that the wealthy heiress could stoop to love a penniless officer. And yet," I continued, "my fathers were as noble as hers; ay! and enjoyed wealth and honors to which the St. Clairs never aspired." But again a revulsion came across my feelings, and I said, "O Annette, Annette! could you but know my misery, you might have paused. But God grant you may find a heart as true to you as mine." Thus harassed by contending emotions, now giving way to my love, and now yielding to indignation and pride, I spent the day, and when at night, preparatory to retiring, I happened to cast a look into the mirror, I started back at my haggard appearance. But there are moments of agony which do the work of years.

CHAPTER. XII.

THE LAST SHOT AND ITS DOOM.

My messmates, one and all, were astonished at my speedy return, but luckily it had been determined to put to sea at once, so that if I had remained at Pomfret Hall until the expiration of my leave of absence, I should have lost the cruise. One or two of my companions, who prided themselves on their superior intelligence, gave me the credit of having, by some unknown means, heard of the change in our day of sailing, and so hastened my return to my post. They little dreamed of the true cause, for to them, as to all others, I wore the same mask of assumed gayety.

We sailed in company with *THE ARROW*, but, ere we had been out a week, were separated from our consort. Our orders were in such an emergency, to make the best of our way southward, and rendezvous at St. Domingo.

I had turned in one night, after having kept watch on deck until midnight, when in the midst of a refreshing sleep, I was suddenly awoke by a hand laid on my shoulder, at the same time that a voice said:

“Hist ! Cavendish ; don’t talk in your sleep.”

I started to my feet, but, for a moment, my faculties were in such a whirl that the dream in which I had been reveling, mingling with the scene before my waking senses, confused and bewildered me so that I knew not what I uttered.

“St. Clair ! Pomfret Hall ! why your wits are wool gathering, my dear fellow,” said the doctor — for I now recognized my old friend — “of what have you been dreaming ? You look as if you thought me a specter sent to call you from Paradise.”

I had indeed been dreaming. I fancied I was far away, wandering amid the leafy shades of Pomfret Hall, with Annette leaning on my arm, and ever and anon gazing up into my face with looks of unutterable love. I heard the rustle of the leaves, the jocund song of the birds, and the soothing sound of the woodland waterfall, but sweeter, ay ! a thousand times sweeter than all these, came to my ears the low whisper of my affianced bride. Was I not happy ? And we sat down on a verdant bank, and, with her hand clasped in mine, and her fair head resting on my bosom, we talked of the happiness which was in store for us, and projected a thousand plans for the future. From visions like this I awoke to the consciousness that Annette was lost to me forever, and that even now the smiles and caresses of which I had dreamed were being bestowed upon another

A pang of keenest agony, a sharp, sudden pang, as if an icebolt had shot through my heart, almost deprived me for a moment of utterance, and I was fain to lean against a timber for support. But this weakness was only momentary, for, rallying every energy, I conquered my feelings, though not so soon but that the doctor saw my emotion.

"Are you sick, my dear fellow?" he said anxiously. "No, well, you do look better, now. But I came to inform you that as rascally a looking craft as ever you saw is dodging us to the windward, and the Lord only knows whether we won't all be prisoners, and mayhap dead men before night."

I hurried on my clothes, and, following him to the deck, saw, at the first glance, that the good doctor's fears respecting the strange sail were not without foundation. She was a sharp, low brig, with masts raking far aft, and a spread of canvas towering from her decks sufficient to have driven a sloop-of-war. The haze of the morning had concealed her from sight until within the last five minutes; but now the broad disk of the sun, rising majestically behind her, brought out her masts, tracery, and hull in bold and distinct relief.

"A rover by ——," said the skipper, who had been scrutinizing the strange sail through a glass; "and she is treble our force," he continued, in a whisper to me. "We have no choice, either, but to fight."

"She sails like a witch, too," I replied, in the same low tone, "and would overhaul us, no matter what her positions might be."

"I wish we were a dozen leagues away," said the captain, shrugging his shoulders; "there is little honor and no profit in fighting these cut-throats, and if we are whipt, as we shall be, they will slit our windpipes as if we were so many sheep in a slaughter-house. Bah!"

"Not so," I exclaimed enthusiastically, "we will die sword in hand. Since these murderers have crossed our path we must, if every thing else fail, suffer them to board us, and then blow the schooner out of water. I myself will fire the train."

"Now, by the God above us, you speak as a brave man should, and shame my momentary disgust, for fear I will not call it. No, Jack Merrivale never wanted courage, however prudence might have been lacking. But little did I think that you, Cavendish, would ever show less prudence than myself, as you have to-day. You seem a changed man."

"I am one," I exclaimed; "but that is neither here nor there. When once yon freebooter gets alongside, Harry Cavendish will not be behindhand in doing his duty."

My superior, at any other time, could not have failed to notice the excitement under which I spoke, but now his mind was too fully occupied to give my demeanor a second thought, and our conversation was cut short by a ball from the pirate, which, whistling over our heads, plumped into the sea some fathoms distant. At the same

instant a mass of dark bunting shot up to the gaff of the brig, and, slowly unrolling, blew out steadily in the breeze, disclosing a black flag, unrelieved by a single emblem. But we well knew the meaning of that ominous ensign.

"He taunts us with his accursed flag," said the skipper energetically; "by the Lord that liveth, he shall feel that freemen know how to defend their lives and honor. Call aft the men, and then to quarters. We will blow yon scoundrels cut of water, or die on the last plank."

Never did I listen to more vehement, more soul-stirring eloquence than that which rolled, like a tide of fire, from the captain's lips when the men had gathered aft. Every eye flashed with indignation, every bosom heaved with high and noble daring, as he pointed impetuously to the foe, and asked if there was one who heard him that wished to shrink from the contest. To his impassioned appeal they answered with a loud huzza, brandished their cutlasses above their heads and swearing to stand by him to the last.

"I know it, my brave boys — I remember how you fought the privateer's men," for most of his old crew had re-entered; "but yonder cut-throats are still more deceitful, and blood-thirsty. We have nothing to hope for from them but a short shrift and the yard-arm. We fight, not for our country and property alone, but for our lives also. The little FALCON has struck down too many prizes already, to show the coward's feather now. Let us make these decks slippery with our best blood rather than surrender. Stand by me, if they board us, and — my word on it — the survivors will long talk of this glorious day. And now, my brave lads, splice the main brace, and then to quarters."

Another cheer followed the close of this harangue, when the men gathered at their quarters, each one as he passed to his station receiving a glass of grog. As I ran my eye along the decks, and saw the stalwart frames and flashing eyes of the crew, I felt assured that the day was destined to be desperately contested; and then I thought of the vast odds against which we had to contend, and the glorious deeds which this superiority would make room for, I experienced an exultation which I can not describe. The time for which, in the bitterness of my heart, I had prayed, was come; and I resolved to dare things this day which, if they ever reached the ears of Annette, should prove to her that I died the death of a gallant soldier. The thought that, perhaps, she might regret me when I was gone, was sweeter to me than the song of many waters.

Little time, however, was left for such emotions, for scarcely had the men taken their stations when the pirate, who had hitherto been manœuvring for a favorable position and only occasionally firing a shot, opened his batteries on us, discharging his guns in such quick succession that his sides seemed one continuous blaze, and his tall masts were to be seen reeling backward from the shock of his broadside. Instantaneously the iron tempest came hurling across us, and for a space I was bewildered by the rending of timbers, the

falling of spars, and the agonizing shrieks of the wounded. The main-topmast came rattling to the deck with all its hamper at the very moment that a messmate fell dead beside me. For a few minutes all was consternation and confusion. So rapid had been the discharges, and so well aimed had been each shot, that, in the twinkling of an eye, we saw ourselves almost a wreck on the water, and comparatively at the mercy of our foe.

"Clear away this hamper," shouted the skipper, "stand to your guns forward there, and give it to the pirate."

With the word the two light pieces and the gun midships opened on the now rapidly closing foe; but the metal of all except the swivel was so light that it did no perceptible damage on the thick-ribbed hull of our antagonist. The ball from the long eighteen, however, swept the decks of the foe, and appeared to have carried no little havoc in its course. But the broadside did not check the approach of the rover. His object was manifestly to run us afoul and board us. Steadily, therefore, he maintained his course, swerving scarcely a hair's breadth at our discharge, but keeping right on as if scorning our futile efforts to check his progress. We did not, however, intermit our exertions. Although crippled we were not disheartened—despairing, we entertained no thought of submission, but rallying around our guns, we fought them like lions at bay, firing with such rapidity that our decks, and the ocean around, soon came to be almost obscured in the thick fleecy vail of smoke that settled slowly on the water. For a short space we even lost sight of our antagonist, and the gunners paused, uncertain where to fire; but suddenly the lofty spars of the pirate were seen riding above the white fog, scarcely a pistol-shot from us, and in another minute, with a deafening crash, the rover ran us aboard, his bowsprit jamming in our fore-rigging as he approached us head on. Almost before we could recover from our surprise we heard a stern voice crying out in the Spanish tongue for boarders, and immediately a dark mass of ruffians gathered, like a cluster of bees, on the bowsprit of the foe, with cutlasses brandished aloft, preparatory to a descent on our decks.

"Rally to repel boarders!" thundered the skipper, springing forward; "ho! beat back the bloodhounds from your decks," and with the word, he made a blow at a desperado who, at that moment, sprang into the fore-rigging; when my superior drew back his sword it was red with the heart's blood of the assailant, who, falling heavily backward with a dull plash, squatted a second on the water, like a wounded water-fowl, and then sank forever. For a single breath his companions stood appalled, and then, with a savage yell, leaping on our decks, fiercely attacked our little band. In vain our gallant tars disputed every inch of ground—in vain one after another of the assailants dyed the deck with his blood. Step by step our brave lads were steadily forced backward, until at length the whole fore-castle was in possession of the foe, and a solid mass of freebooters was advancing on the starboard side of the open main-hatch, in

eager pursuit of the retreating crew. I had foreseen this result to the conflict, and instead, therefore, of aiding to repel the boarders, had been engaged in loading one of the lighter guns with grape, and dragging it around, so as to command this very path; - a duty which I had been enabled to perform unnoticed by either party in the fierce excitement of the *melce*. I had hardly masked my little battery, and not three minutes had elapsed from the first onset of the boarders, when my messmates came driving toward me, as I have described, beaten in by the solid masses of the enemy. Already the fugitives had passed the hatchway, and the foremost desperadoes of the assailing column were even now within three feet of the muzzle of my gun, when I signed to my confederate to jerk off the tarpaulin which had masked our piece. Quick as lightning I applied the match, and the whole fiery cataract was belched upon them. Language can not depict the fearful havoc of that discharge. The hurricane of fire and shot mowed its way lengthwise, through the narrow and crowded column, scattering the dying and the dead beneath its track, as a whirlwind uproots the forest-trees.

"Now charge." I shouted, as if seized with a sudden frenzy, springing into the midst of the foe. "No quarter to the knaves. Hew them to the brisket," and following every word with a blow, and seconded by our men, who seemed to catch my fury, we made such havoc among those of the pirates whom the grape had spared, that, astonished, paralyzed, disconcerted, and finally struck with mortal fear, they fled wildly from the schooner, some regaining their craft by the bowsprit, some plunging overboard and swimming to her, and some leaping headlong into the deep never to rise again. Seizing an ax, I hastily cut our hamper loose from the foe, and with the next swell the two vessels slowly parted.

"Now to your guns, my men," shouted the skipper, unconscious of a dangerous wound, in the excitement of the moment; "give it to them before they can rally. Fire!"

We poured in our broadsides like hail, riddling even the solid sides of our foe, and making his decks slippery with blood, and all this before the discomfited freebooters could rally to their guns and return our shots.

"Ah! he has woke up at last," said my old friend, the captain of our long Tom, "and she may yet regain the day if we don't fight like devils. Bring me that shot from the galley."

"In God's name, what do you mean?" said I, as he coolly sat down by his piece. "In with the ball and let the rover have it - not a moment is to be lost."

"Ay! I knows that, lieutenant; and here comes the settler for which I waited," he exclaimed, as the cook brought a red-hot shot from the galley; "I thought I'd venture on a little experiment of my own and I've seen 'em do wonders with these fiery comets afore now. There - there she has it," he exclaimed, as the shot was sent home; "now God have mercy on them varmint's souls."

From some strange, unaccountable presentiment, I stepped me-

chanically backward and cast an eye at the brig, which had now floated to some distance. As I did so, a trail of fire glanced before my sight, and I saw the simmering shot enter her side. Thought was not quicker than the explosion which followed, shaking the sea beneath, and the sky above, almost deafening the ear with its unearthly concussion, while instantaneously a gush of flame shot far up into the sky; the masts of the vessel were lifted perpendicularly upward, and the whole air was filled with shattered timbers and mangled human bodies that fell the next minute pattering around us into the deep. Oh God! the fearful sight! The shrieks of the wounded and drowning — the awful struggles of the poor wretches in the water — the sullen cloud that settled over the scene of death, will they ever pass away from my memory? But I drop a veil over a sight too horrible to recount. Suffice it to say, of all the rover's crew, not one survived to see that sun go down. A few we picked up with our boats, but they died ere night. The cause of the explosion is soon told. The brig's magazine had been struck and fired by our **LAST SHOT.**

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOOM OF THE DART.

THE day had been close and sultry, but, as sunset drew on, a light breeze sprung up, which diffused a delicious coolness throughout the ship, imparting new vigor to the panting and almost exhausted men. Invigorated by the welcome wind, a group of us gathered on the weather quarter to behold the sun go down; and those who have never seen such a spectacle at sea, can have no idea of the vastness with which it fills the mind. Slowly the broad disk wheeled down toward the west, seeming to dilate as it approached the horizon, and, as its lower edge touched the distant sea-board, trailing a long line of golden light across the undulating surface of the deep. At this instant the scene was magnificent. Pile on pile of clouds, assuming every fantastic shape, and varying from red to purple, and from purple to gold, lay heaped around the setting god. For a few moments the billows could be seen rising and falling against the broad disk of the descending luminary: while, with a slow and scarcely perceptible motion, he gradually slid beneath the horizon. Insensibly the brilliant hues of the clouds died away, changing from gorgeous crimson, through almost every gradation of color, until at length a faint apple-green invested the whole western sky, slowly fading into a deep azure, as it approached the zenith.

“Beautiful!” exclaimed the skipper; “one might almost become poetical in gazing on such a scene.”

The sun had now been hid for some minutes, and the apple-green of the sky was rapidly becoming colder and more indistinct, though the edge of a solitary dark cloud, hanging a few degrees above the horizon, was yet tipped with a faint crimson. Meantime the stars began to appear in the opposite firmament, one after another twinkling into sight, as if by magic, until the whole eastern heaven was gemmed with them. I looked around the horizon. Never before had its immensity so forcibly impressed me. The vast concave, swelling high above me and gradually rounding away toward the distant sea-board, seemed almost of illimitable extent; and when, over all the mighty space of ocean included within its circuit, my eye rested on not a solitary sail, I experienced a sensation of loneliness, such as no pen can describe. And when the breeze again died away, leaving the sails idly flapping to and fro as the schooner rocked on the swell, my imagination suggested that perhaps it might be our doom, as it had been that of others, to lie for days, nay, weeks and months, powerless in the midst of that desert latitude, shut out from the world, inclosed within the blue walls of that gigantic prison; and I shuddered, as well I might, at the very idea of such a fate.

It was now a dead calm. No perceptible agitation could be discovered on the surface of the deep, except the long undulating swell which never subsides, and which can be compared to nothing but the heavy breathing of some gigantic monster when lulled to repose. Now and then, however, a tiny ripple, occasioned by the gambol of some equally tiny inhabitant of the deep, would twinkle sharp in the starlight; while, close under the shadow of our hull, a keen eye might detect hundreds of the fairy fire-flies of the ocean, their phosphoric lanterns glittering gayly as they shot to and fro. Absorbed in the contemplation of the spectacle, I suffered more than half an hour to pass unheeded; and it was not until the sea began to be sensibly agitated, and the wind to freshen, that I looked up. The change which had come over the firmament astonished me, and requires a passing description.

When I had last looked at the heavens, the whole eastern sky was thick sown with stars, though no moon had as yet appeared. Along the western sea-board still stretched the long line of pale apple-green which the setting sun had painted in that quarter. The firmament overhead was without a cloud, its dark azure surface spangled with stars. Between the zenith and eastern horizon hung the dark cloud which I have already mentioned, a black opaque mass of vapor apparently not larger than a capstan head. But every thing now presented a different aspect. The first thing that met my eye was the upper portion of the disk of the moon, peeping above the eastern sea-board, the dark fiery red of its face betraying the existence of a thin mist in that direction. Fascinated by the sight, I remained gazing for more than a minute on the rising luminary, as she emerged gracefully and majestically from her watery bed. At length, and ap-

parently with an accelerated motion, she slid suddenly above the line of the horizon, peering a line of silver light along the crests of the undulating swell, while instantaneously, as if putting on all her glory, she emerged from the mist that had surrounded her, and rolled on in pearly brightness, calm and undimmed, the stars fading before her approach. One planet alone remained visible — it was the evening star, walking in almost equal beauty, a little to the right of her sister luminary. Never before had those fine lines of Milton, in which he pictures her as leading on the choral hosts of heaven, rose so vividly before my imagination.

When I turned my gaze westward, how different the spectacle that met my eye! The little cloud which I have described, had grown to a gigantic size, and now obscured the whole larboard firmament, extending its dark and jagged front a third of the way around the horizon, and piling its gloomy masses high up toward the zenith. Here and there, where a thinner edge than usual was disclosed to the light, it caught the rays of the rising luminary which it reflected back, so that the cloud seemed lined with silver. The sea, immediately under this gloomy bank of vapor, was of the color of ink, and reminded me of the fabled waters of Acheron. The whole spectacle was calculated to fill the mind with dark and ominous forebodings; and, I confess, my own feelings partook of this uneasy character.

The wind was rapidly freshening; but, instead of setting in steadily from any quarter, it blew in fitful gusts, chopping all round the horizon. Yet it brought a delicious coolness with it which was peculiarly refreshing after the heat of the day. The sea now began to rise, and as the dark billows heaved up in the spectral light, they wore an aspect so ghastly that I almost shuddered to look on them — an aspect, however, that was partially relieved when the unquiet puffs of air crisped their edges into silver, or rolled a sheet of crackling light along their surface. With the freshening of the wind, the schooner began slowly to move ahead, but, ever and anon, as the breeze died away, or struck her from a new quarter, she would settle like a log on the water, moaning as if in pain. At such times the dying cadence of the wind, wailing through the rigging, smote on the ear with strange, weird power.

“A threatening prospect,” said the skipper, approaching me, and breaking the profound silence which had reigned for several minutes; “we shall have a tempest before long, and I fear it will be no child’s play.”

“I never saw such ominous signs before. The very air seems oppressed and sick, as if it trembled at approaching ruin. Mark the faces even of our oldest veterans — they betray a vague sentiment of fear, such as I never saw on their countenances before.”

“Ay!” replied the skipper, abstractedly, for he was gazing anxiously astern, “the cloud comes up like a race-horse. How it whirls over and over, rolling its dark masses along; it reminds me of the mountains which the old Titans, we read of in school, heaved against Jove. But here am I thinking of classic fables when I

sought to be taking in sail. Ho!" he exclaimed, lifting his voice, as a sharp gust, premonitory of the coming hurricane, whistled across the hamper, "in sail — every rag!"

No time was to be lost. During the short space we had been conversing, the dark clouds astern had increased their velocity threefold, and, even as the skipper spoke, the most advanced of them had overshadowed us with its sepulchral pall. As the momentary puff of air accompanying it died away, a few large heavy rain-drops pattered on the deck, and then all was still again. The men sprung to their stations, at the voice of their superior, and incited to double activity by these signs of approaching danger, soon reduced our canvas, until the schooner lay, with bare poles, rocking on the swell. Scarcely had this task been completed, when the gale burst on us in all its fury, roaring, hissing, and howling through the rigging, and drenching us with the clouds of spray that it tore from the bosom of the deep and bore onward in its fierce embraces. For a few minutes we could scarcely stand before the blast. The schooner groaned, and starting forward at the first touch of the hurricane, like a steed when he feels the spur, went careering along, her tall masts curving over in the gale, and her hull shrouded in the flying spray which drove onward with even greater velocity than ourselves. In this desperate encounter with the elements, every rope and stick strained and cracked almost to breaking. All at once this hurricane died out, and then an awful stillness fell on the scene. Not a voice spoke, not a footfall was heard, scarcely a breath broke the appalling silence. The schooner rose and fell ominously on the agitated swell. Suddenly a flash of lightning played far off on the dark edges of the cloud behind us, and then followed a low, hoarse growl of distant thunder. Scarcely a minute elapsed before a large rain-drop fell on my face, and instantaneously, as if the heavens were opened before us, a deluge of rain rushed downward, hissing and seething along the decks, and almost pinning us to our places; while the wind, bursting out afresh, swept wildly across the sea, and driving the spray and rain madly before it, produced a scene of confusion and tumult almost indescribable. For some minutes I could see nothing in the thick darkness which now surrounded us — could hear nothing but the roar of the hurricane and the splash of the waters. But suddenly a blinding flash shot from a cloud almost directly overhead, lighting up the deck, spars, and guns for an instant, with a supernatural glare, and striking the ocean a few fathoms distant, plowed up the waters, which it flung in volumes of spray in every direction. Before a clock could tick, the report followed, stunning us with its deafening roar, and rattling and crackling fearfully as it echoed down the sky. Never shall I forget the ghastly looks of the men, as I beheld them in that unearthly glare. And minutes after darkness had resumed its sway, and the roar of the thunder had died in the distance, my eyes still ached with that intense light, and the crackling of the bolt rung in my ears.

"East, by east-sou'-east," said the skipper, and driving like death God of heaven, what a storm!"

The words had scarcely left his mouth before another peal of thunder even more awful than the preceding one I have described, burst overhead, and stunning us for an instant with its terrific explosion, rattled down the sky, crackling and re-crackling in its retreat, as if the firmament were crushing to its center: it was accompanied rather than preceded by a flash, such as I had never seen before, blinding me instantaneously with its glare, and making every object swim dizzily before the brain. On the moment I felt a stunning shock, and was prostrated on the deck, while a strong smell of sulphur pervaded the atmosphere. The deluge of rain revived me, and I looked up in alarm. Good God! the foremast was in flames! *We had been struck with lightning!*

Quick as thought the whole horrors of our situation rose before me. We were on a pathless sea amid a raging storm. That there was little hope of extinguishing the flames, was evident, for, even while these thoughts flashed through my mind, a volume of smoke puffed up through the fore-castle, and a cry ran through the decks that the whole forward part of the schooner was on fire. There was no time, however, to be lost, if we would make any effort to save ourselves; and, faint as was the hope of success, it was determined to attempt to smother the flames, by fastening down the hatches and excluding the air. But the fierce heat that filled the decks told us that the endeavor would be in vain; nor was it long before the fore-hatch was blown up with a loud explosion, while a stream of fire shot high up into the air; and, the next minute, the forked tongues had caught hold of the rigging, wrapping shrouds, ropes, and yards in a sheet of lurid flame. The rapidity with which all this occurred was incredible. It seemed as if but a minute had elapsed since that terrific bolt had burst above us, and now the whole forward part of the schooner was a mass of fire, that streamed out before the tempest like a blood-red banner; showers of sparks, and even burning fragments of the wreck, flying far away ahead on the gale. There are periods, however, even of long duration, which appear to be but momentary, and so it was now. So wholly had every energy been devoted to the preservation of the ship, that time had passed almost unnoticed, though a full half hour had elapsed since we had been struck with lightning. The storm, however, still raged as furiously as ever: for though the rain was less violent, the wind blew a hurricane, threatening to settle down into a long-sustained gale. Had the torrents of water, which first drenched us, continued falling, there might have been some hope of extinguishing the flames; but the subsidence of the rain, and the unaltered violence of the wind, rendered the situation of the schooner hopeless.

"We can do nothing more, I fear," at length said the skipper, drawing me aside, "the fire is on the increase, and even the elements have turned against us. We must leave the little DART to her fate, unless you can think of something else to do?" and he looked inquiringly at me.

"Alas:" I replied, with a mournful shake of my head, "we

have done every thing that mortal man can do, but in vain. We must now think of saving ourselves. Had we not better order out the boats?"

The skipper did not, for a moment, reply to my question, but stood, with his arms folded on his breast, and a face of the deepest dejection, gazing on the burning fore-castle. At length he spoke.

"Many a long day have we sailed together, in many a bold fray have we fought for each other, and now to leave you, my gallant craft, ah! little did I think this would be your doom. But God's will be done. We must all perish sooner or later, and better go down here than rot, a forgotten hulk, on some muddy shore — better consume to ashes than fall a prey to some huge cormorant of an enemy. And yet," he continued, his eye lighting up, "and yet I should have wished to die with you under the guns of one of those gigantic monsters — ay! die battling for the possession of your deck inch by inch." At this instant one of the forward guns, which had become heated almost to redness in the conflagration, exploded. The sound seemed to recall him to himself. He started as if roused from a reverie, and, noticing me beside him, recollected my question. Immediately resuming his usual energy, he proceeded to call out the boats, and provide provisions and a few hasty instruments, with a calmness which was in striking contrast to the raging sea around, and the lurid fire raging on our bows.

The high discipline of the men enabled us to complete our preparations in a space of time less than one half that which would have been consumed by an ordinary crew under like circumstances; and, indeed, in many cases, all subordination would have been lost, and perhaps the ruin of the whole been the consequence. The alacrity of the men and the forecast of the officers were indeed needed; for our preparation had scarcely been completed when the heat on the deck became intolerable. The fire had now reached the main-hatch, and, notwithstanding the violence of the gale, was extending aft with great rapidity, and had already enveloped the main-mast in its embraces. For some time before we left the schooner, the heat, even at the taffrail, almost scorched the skin from our faces; nor did we descend into the boats a minute too soon. This was a feat also by no means easily accomplished, so great was the agitation of the sea. As I looked on the frail boats which were to receive us, and thought of the perils which environed us, of our distance from land, and the slight quantity of provisions we had been enabled to save, I felt that in all human probability, we should never again set foot on shore, even if we survived until morning. To my own fate I was comparatively indifferent, for life had now lost all charms to me; but when I reflected on the brave men who were to be consigned to the same destiny, and of the ties by which many of them were bound to earth — of the wives who would become widows, of aged parents who would be left childless, of children for whom the orphan's lot was preparing — the big tears gushed into my eyes, and coursed down my cheek, though unobserved.

"All ready," said the skipper, who was the last to leave the deck, and pausing to cast a mournful look at his little craft, he sprung into the boat and we pushed off from the quarter. For some minutes, however, it seemed doubtful whether our frail barges could live in the tumultuous sea that now raged. One minute we were hurried to the sky on the bosom of a wave, and then we plunged headlong into the dark trough below, the walls of water on either hand momentarily threatening to overwhelm us. But though small, our boats were buoyant, and rode gallantly onward. Every exertion was made, meanwhile, to increase our distance from the schooner, for our departure had been hurried by the fear that the fire would soon reach the magazine, and our proximity to the burning ship still continued to threaten us with destruction in case of an explosion. The men, conscious of the peril, strained every sinew to effect our object, and thus battling against wind and wave we struggled on our way.

With every fathom we gained, the sight of the burning ship increased in magnificence. The flames had now seized the whole after part of the schooner as far back as the companion way, so that hull, spars, and rigging were a sheet of fire, which, caught in the fierce embraces of the hurricane, now whirled around, now streamed straight out, and now broke into a thousand forked tongues, licking up the masts and around the spars like so many fiery serpents. Millions of sparks poured down to leeward, while ever and anon huge patches of flame would be torn from the main body of the conflagration and blown far away ahead. Volumes of dark, pitchy smoke, curling up from the decks of the schooner, often partially concealed a portion of the flames, but they reappeared a moment afterward with even greater vividness. In some places so intense was the conflagration that the fire was at a white heat. The whole horizon was illuminated with the light, except just over and ahead of the schooner, where a black smoky cloud had gathered, looking like the wing of some gigantic monster of another world; and no description can adequately picture the spectral aspect of the gloomy waves that rolled up their ghastly crest beneath this canopy.

"She can not last much longer," said the doctor, who was in my boat, "the flames will soon reach the magazine."

"Ay! ay! and look there—"

As I spoke, a vivid, blinding jet of fire streamed high up into the air, while the masts of the schooner could be seen, amid the flame, shooting arrow-like to the sky. Instantaneously a roar as of ten thousand batteries smote the ear; and then came the pattering of fragments of the hull and spars as they fell on the water. Even while these sounds continued, a darkness that brought to my mind that of the day of doom enveloped us, though that intense light still swam in our eyes, producing a thousand fantastic images on the retina. No word was spoken, but each one held his breath in awe and then came a long, deep drawn sigh, that seemed to proceed simultaneously from each one in the boat. *The Dart was no more.* We were alone in the boundless deep, alone with a storm still raging

around us, alone without any hope of rescue, and a thousand miles from land. God only knew whether it would be our lot to perish by starvation, or sink at an earlier hour a prey to the overwhelming deep.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OPEN BOAT — DEATH OF THE SHIP'S BOY — A SAIL

How shall I describe the horror of that seemingly endless night? Borne onward at the mercy of the waves, possessing just sufficient control over the boat to keep her head in the proper direction — now losing sight altogether of our consort, and now hanging on the top of the wave while she lay directly under us, we passed the moments in a succession of hopes and fears which no human pen can adequately describe. As the night advanced our sufferings increased. The men, worn out with fatigue, were kept at their oars only by the consciousness that even a moment's respite might be our destruction. With difficulty we maintained even the slightest communication with our fellow-sufferers in the other boat, and, as the hours wore away, communication became almost impossible. It was only at intervals that we caught sight of our companions through the gloom, or heard their loud huzzas in answer to our shouts. And no one, except he who has been in a like situation, can tell how our sense of loneliness was relieved when we saw these glimpses of our consort, or caught the welcome sound of other voices than our own across that fathomless abyss.

At length a gigantic wave rolled up between us and the launch, and, when we rose from the trough of the sea, I fancied I heard beneath us a wild, prolonged cry of human agony. At the sound, my blood curdled in my veins, and I strove to pierce the obscurity ahead, hoping almost against hope that our companions yet survived, and that I might catch a glimpse of the launch; but my straining eyes scanned the prospect in vain, for the thick darkness shut out every thing from my vision, except when the ghastly foam whitened along the waves beside me. For an instant I tried to believe that what I heard had sprung from a disordered fancy, but the eager, yet horror-struck faces of my shipmates beside me soon convinced me that I was not the only one who had heard that cry. We looked at each other for a moment, as men may be supposed to look who have seen a visitant from the tomb, and then, with one common impulse, we joined in a halloo that rose wildly to windward, swept down on us, rose again, and finally died away to leeward a melancholy notes

No answering cry met our ears. Again and again we united in a shout — again and again the roar of the wind and wash of the waves was our only reply. Suddenly a flash of lightning blazed around us, and taking advantage of the momentary light thus shed on the prospect, I gazed once more across the waste of waters. We hung, at the moment, on the topmost height of a mountain wave while beneath yawned a black abyss, along whose sides the foam was rolling in volumes, while the ghastly crests of each mimic billow and the pitchy darkness of the depths below were lit up with the awful glare of the lightning, presenting to the imagination a scene that reminded me of the lake of fire into which Milton's apostate spirits fell. Just at the lowest point of the vortex a boat was seen, bottom upward, while, in close proximity to it, one or two human forms were struggling in the sea; but all in vain; for at every despairing stroke they were borne further and further from the few frail planks which now were to them their world. Oh! never will that sight fade from my memory. A cry of horror broke simultaneously from all who beheld the scene, and long after it had vanished from our eyes, we heard the first despairing shriek of our drowning messmates, we saw the last look of agony ere they sank forever. To save them was beyond our power. As we were whirled down into the abyss, we leaned over the gunwale to catch, if possible, a sign of the vicinity of any of the sufferers, but our efforts were in vain; and, after watching and listening for more than an hour, we desisted in despair. As the storm gradually passed away, and the stars broke out on high, diffusing a shadowy light around us, we gazed again across the waste for some token of our lost messmates, but our scrutiny was in vain. The tale of their death, save as it is rehearsed in these hurried pages, will never be told until the judgment-day.

Morning at length dawned. Insensibly the first cold streaks of day crept along the eastern horizon, gradually diffusing a gray twilight over the vast solitude of waters around, and filling the mind with a sensation of utter loneliness, which, though I had experienced it partially before, never affected me with such indescribable power as now. As far the eye could stretch there was nothing to break the vast monotony of the horizon. All knew that we were out of the usual route of ships crossing the Atlantic, and that our chances of rescue were consequently lessened. We were, moreover, nearly a thousand miles from land, with but scanty provisions, and those damaged. Our boat was frail, and one far stronger had already been submerged — what, then, would probably — nay! must be our fate. It was easy to see that these thoughts were passing through the minds of all, and that a feeling akin to despair was gathering around every heart.

“Cheer up, my hearties!” at length said Bill Seston, a favorite topman, looking round on his companions; “it's always the darkest just before day, and if we don't meet a sail now, we must look all the sharper for one to-morrow. Never say die while you hear the wind overhead, or see the waves frolicking around you

Twenty years have I sailed, in one craft or another, and often been in as bad scrapes as this — so it's hard to make me think we're going to Davy Jones' locker this time. Cheer up, cheer up, braves, and I'll give you 'Bold Hawthorne,' " and, with these words, he broke out into a song, whose words acted like an inspiration on the crew, and in a moment the air rung with the ballad, chorused forth by a dozen stentorian voices. And thus, alternating between hope and despair, we spent the day.

The gale had long since sunk into a light breeze, and the mountainous waves were rapidly subsiding into that long measured swell which characterizes the deep when not unusually agitated. Over the wide surface of the dark, azure sea, however, might be seen ten thousand crests of foam, one minute crisping into existence, and the next disappearing on the declining surge; and as the hour approached high noon, each of these momentary sheets of spray glistened in the sunbeams like frosted silver. Overhead the dark, deep sky glowed as in a furnace, while around us the sea was as molten brass. Parched with thirst, yet not daring to exceed the allowance of water on which we had determined — burning in the intense heat, without the possibility of obtaining shelter — worn out in body and depressed in spirits, it required all my exertions, backed by one or two of the more sanguine of the crew, to keep the men from utter despair, nor was it until evening again drew on, and the intolerable heat of a tropical day had given way to the comparative coolness of twilight, that the general despondency gave way. Then again the hopes of the men revived, only, however, to be once more cast down when darkness closed over the scene, with the certainty we should obtain no relief until the ensuing day.

Why need I recount the sufferings of that second night, which was only less dreadful than the preceding one, because the stars afforded us some comparative light, sufficing only, however, to keep us on the watch for a strange sail, without allowing us to hope for success in our watch, unless by almost a miracle! Why should I narrate the alternation of hope and fear on the ensuing day, which did not differ from this one, save in the fiercer heat of noonday, and the more utter exhaustion of the men? What boots it to recount the sick long days and nights, each one like its predecessor, only that each one grew more and more intolerable, until at length, parched and worn out, like the Israelites of old, we cried out at night, "Would God it were morning," and in the morning "Would God it were evening!"

And thus, week after week passed, until our provisions and water were exhausted, and yet no relief arrived, but day after day we floated helplessly on that boiling ocean, or were chilled by the icy and unwholesome dews of night. Hunger and thirst and heat — fever and despair contended together for the mastery, and we were the victims. Often before I had read of men who were thus exposed, coming at length to such a pitch of madness and despair, that they groveled in the bottom of the boat, and cried out for death; but

never had I thought such things could be credible. Now how fearfully were my doubts removed! I saw the lion-hearted men weeping like infants—I beheld those whose strength was as that of a giant, subdued and powerless—I heard men who, in other circumstances, would have clung tenaciously to life, now sullenly awaiting their fate, or crying out, in their agony, for death to put a period to their suffering. No pen, however graphic—no imagination, however vivid, can do justice to the fearful horrors of our situation. Every morning dawned with the same hope of a sail in sight, and every night gathered around us with the same despairing consciousness that our hope was in vain.

There was one of my crew, a pale, delicate lad, whom I shall never forget. He was the only son of a widow, and had entered the navy, though against her will, to earn an honorable subsistence for her. Though he had been among us but a short time, he had already distinguished himself by his address and bravery, while his frank demeanor had made him a universal favorite. Since the loss of the DART he had borne up against our privations with a heroism that had astonished me. When the rest were sad, he was cheerful; and no suffering, however great, could wring from him a complaint. But on the twentieth day—after having tasted no food for forty-eight hours—the mortal tenement proved too weak for his nobler soul. He was already dreadfully emaciated, and for some days I had been surprised at his powers of endurance. But now he could hold out no longer, and was forced to confess that he was ill. I felt his pulse—he was in a high fever. Delirium soon seized him, and throughout all that day and night he was deprived of reason. His ravings would have melted the heart of a Nero. He seemed conscious of his approaching end, and dwelt constantly, in terms of the most heart-rending agony, on his widowed mother—so soon to be deprived of her only solace and support. Oh! the terrible eloquence of his words. Now he alluded in the most touching accents to his father's death—now he recounted the struggles in his mother's heart when he proposed going to sea—and now he dwelt on her grief when she should hear of his untimely end, or watch month after month, and year after year, in the vain hope of again pressing him to her bosom. There were stern men there, listening to his plaintive lamentations, who had, perhaps, never shed a tear before, but the fountains of whose souls were now loosened, and who wept as only a man can weep. There were sufferers beside him, whose own anguish almost racked their hearts to pieces, yet who turned aside from it to sorrow over him. And, as hour after hour passed away, and he waxed weaker and weaker, one feeble shipmate after another volunteered to hold his aching head, for all thought of the lone widow, far, far away, who was even now perhaps making some little present for the boy whom she should never see again.

It was the evening of the day after his attack, and lay with his head on my lap, when the sufferer, after an unusually deep sleep of more than an hour, woke up, and faintly opening his eyes lifted

them to me. It was a moment before he could recognize me, but then a grateful smile stole over his wan face. I saw at a glance that the fever had passed away, and I knew enough of the dying hour to know that this return of reason foreboded a speedy dissolution. He made an attempt to raise his hand to his face, but weakness prevented him. Knowing his wishes, I took my handkerchief and wiped the dampness from his brow. Again that sweet smile played on the face of the boy, and it seemed as if thenceforth the expression of his countenance had in it something not of earth. The hardy seamen saw it too, and leaned forward to look at him.

"Thank you, Mr. Cavendish, thank you," he said, faintly; "I hope I haven't troubled you — I feel better now — almost well enough to sit up."

"No — no, my poor boy," I said, though my emotions almost choked me, "lie still — I can easily hold you. You have slept well?"

Oh! I have had such a sweet sleep, and it was full of happy dreams, though before that it seemed as if I was standing at my father's dying bed, or saw my mother weeping as she wept the night I came away. And then," and a melancholy shadow passed across his face as he spoke, "I thought that she cried more bitterly than ever, as if her very heart were breaking for some one who was dead — and it appears, too, as if I was that one," he said, with child-like simplicity. Then for a moment he mused sadly, but suddenly said, "Do you think I am dying, sir?"

The suddenness of this question startled me, and when I saw those large, clear eyes fixed on me, I was more embarrassed than ever.

"I hope not," I said, brokenly. He shook his head, and again that melancholy shadow passed across his face, and he answered in a tone of grief that brought the tears into other eyes than mine.

"I feel I am. Oh! my poor mother — my poor widowed mother, who will care for you when I am gone?"

"I will," I said, with emotion; "if God spares me to reach the land, I will seek her out, and tell her all about you — what a noble fellow you were —"

"And — and," and here a blush shot over his pale face, "will you see that she never wants — will you?" he continued, eagerly.

"I will," said I, "rest easy on that point, my dear, noble boy."

"Ay! and while there's a shot in the locker for Bill Seaton she shall never want," said the topman, pressing in his own horny hand the more delicate one of the boy.

"God bless you!" murmured the lad faintly, and he closed his eyes. For a moment there was silence, the hot tears falling on his face as I leaned over him. At length he looked up; a smile of joy was on his countenance, and his lips moved. I put my ear to them and listened.

"Mother — father — I die happy, for we shall meet in heaven," were the words that fell in broken murmurs from his lips, and then he sunk back on my lap and was dead. The sun, at the instant, was just sinking behind the distant seaboard. Ah! little did his mother,

as she gazed on the declining luminary from her humble cottage window, think that that sun beheld the dying hour of her boy. Little did she think, as she knelt that night in prayer for him, that she was praying for one whose silent corpse rocked far away on the fathomless sea. Let us hope that when, in her sleep, she dreamed of hearing his loved voice once more, his spirit was hovering over her, whispering comfort in her ear. Thank God, that we can believe the dead thus revisit the earth, and become ministering angels to the sorrowing who are left behind !

Another sun went and came, and even the stoutest of our hearts began to give way. For twenty-three days we had drifted on the pathless deep, and in all that time not a sail had appeared — nothing had met our sight but the brazen sky above and the unbroken deep below. When the sun of the twenty-fourth day arose, vast and red, there was not one of us whose strength was more than that of an infant ; and though, at the first intimation of dawn, we gazed around the horizon as we were wont, there was little hope in our dim and glazing eyes. Suddenly, however, the topman's look became animated, and the color went and came into his face, betokening agitation. Following the direction of his eyes, I saw a small, white speck far off on the horizon. I felt the blood rushing to the ends of my fingers, while a dizziness came over my sight. I controlled my emotion, however, with an effort. At the same instant the doubts of the topman appeared to give way, and waving his hand around his head, he shouted,

“ A sail ! — a sail ! ”

“ Whereaway ? ” eagerly asked a dozen feeble voices, while others of the crew were too far gone to speak, turned their fading eyes in the direction in which all were now looking.

“ Just under yonder fleecy cloud.”

“ I can't see it,” said one, “ surely there is a mistake.”

“ No — we are in the trough of the sea — wait till we rise — there ! ”

“ I see it — I see it — huzza ! ” shouted several.

A sudden animation seemed to pervade all. Some rose to their feet and clasping each other in their arms, wept deliriously — some cast themselves on their knees and returned thanks to God — while some gazed vacantly from one face to another, every now and then breaking into hysterical laughter.

The approaching sail was apparently a merchant-ship of the largest class, and the number of her look-outs seemed to intimate that she was armed. Once we thought that she was about to alter her course — her head turned partially around and one or two of her sails shook in the wind — but, after a moment's anxious suspense, we saw her resume her course, her head pointing nearly toward us. For some time we watched her in silence, eagerly awaiting the moment when she should perceive our lug-sail. But we were doomed to be disappointed. Minute after minute passed by after we had assured ourselves that we were nigh enough to be seen, and yet the stranger appeared unconscious of our vicinity.

"She will pass us!" exclaimed Seaton, the topman; "how can they avoid seeing our sail?"

"We must try to hail them," I said, "or we are lost."

"Ay — ay! it is our only chance," said the topman, and a grim smile passed over his face as he looked around on his emaciated shipmates, and added bitterly, "though it's little likely that such skeletons as we can make ourselves heard to that distance."

"We will try," said I, and raising my hand to time the cry, I hailed the ship. The sound rose feebly on the air and died waveringly away. But no symptoms of its being heard were perceptible on board the stranger.

"Again," I said, "once more!"

A second time the cry rose up from our boat, but this time with more volume than before. Still no look-out moved, and the ship kept on her course.

"A third time, my lads," I said; "we are lost if they hear us not — ahoy!"

"Hilloo!" came floating down toward us, and a topman turned his face directly toward us, leaning his ear over the yard to listen.

"Ahoy! — A-hoy! — Ho-ho-o-oy!" we shouted, joining our voices in a last desperate effort.

"Hilloo — boat ahoy!" were the glad sounds that met our ears in return, and a dozen hands were extended to point out our location. At the instant, the ship gallantly swung around, and bore down directly toward us.

"They see us — praise the Lord — they see us — we are saved!" were the exclamations of the crew as they burst into hysteric tears, and fell on their knees in thanksgiving, again enacting the scene of delirious joy which had characterized the first discovery of the strange sail.

On came the welcome ship — on like a sea-bird on the wing! Scores of curious faces were seen peering over her sides as she approached, while from top and cross-trees a dozen look-outs gazed eagerly toward us. The sun was shining merrily on the waves, which sparkled in his beams like silver; while the murmur of the wind over the deep came pleasantly to our ears. Oh! how different did every thing appear to us now from what it had appeared when hope was banished from our hearts. And when, weak and trembling we were raised to the deck of the stranger, did not our hearts run over with gratitude to God? Let the tears that even our rescuers shed proclaim.

"Water — give us water, for God's sake," was the cry of my men as they struggled to the deck.

"Only a drop now — more you shall have directly," answered the surgeon, as he stood between the half-frenzied men and the water can.

With difficulty the ravenous appetites of the crew were restrained, for to have suffered the men to eat in large quantities after so long

an abstinence, would have insured their speedy leaths. The sick were hurried to cots, while the captain insisted that I should share a portion of his own cabin.

It was many days before we were sufficiently recovered to mingle with our rescuers; and during our sickness we were treated with a kindness which was never forgot.

The strange sail was a privateersman, sailing under the American flag. We continued with her about two months, when she found it necessary to run into port. As we were nearly opposite Block Island, it was determined to stand in for Newport, where accordingly we landed, after an absence of nearly a year.

Here I found that we had been given up for lost. A bucket, with the name of the DART painted on it, having been picked up at sea, from which it was concluded that all on board the vessel had perished. This belief had now become general, in consequence of the lapse of time since we had been heard from. I was greeted, therefore, as one restored from the dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOMF, SWEET HOME.

I WAS now alone in the world; I had neither ship, nor home; and she I had loved was wedded to another. It is strange how misanthropical a man becomes, after disappointment has soured his disposition, and destroyed, one after another, the beautiful dreams of his youth. When I sat down and thought of the hopes of my earlier years, now gone for ever; when I speculated upon my future prospects; when I recalled to mind how few of the friends I had begun life with remained, an indescribable sadness came over me, and, had it not been for my manhood, I would have found a relief in tears. My zest for society was gone. I cared little for the ordinary business of life. I only longed for a fitting opportunity to re-enter the service, and distinguish myself by some gallant deed, which I did not care to survive, for even fame had become hateful to me, since it reminded me how insufficient it was to win or retain the love of a woman. In a word, I had become a misanthrope, and was fast losing all the energy of my character in sickly regrets over the past.

Of the St. Clairs I had not inquired since my return, and their names, from motives of delicacy perhaps, were never mentioned in my presence. Yet they occupied a large portion of my thoughts and often would I start, and my heart flutter, when, in the streets

I fancied, for a moment, that I recognized the form of Annette. But a nearer approach made evident my mistake, and dissipated my embarrassment. Much, however as I thought of her, I had never inquired to whom she had been married; yet my curiosity on this point continually gained strength; and when I had been a fortnight in Newport without hearing any allusion to her, I began to wish that some one would break the ominous silence which seemed to hang around her and her family. Still I dared not trust myself to broach the subject. I continued, therefore, ignorant of their present situation, and of all that concerned them.

There is, not far from the town, and situated in one of the most beautiful portions of the island, a favorite resort which has long been known by the familiar and characteristic name of "the Glen." The spot is one where the deity of romance might sit enshrined. Here, on a still summer night, we might, without much stretch of fancy, look for fairies to come forth and gambol, or listen to the light music of airy spirits hovering above us. The whole place reminds you of an enchanted bower, and dull must be his heart who does not feel the stirrings of the divinity within him as he gazes on the lovely scenery around. He who can listen here unmoved to the low gurgle of the brook, or the light rustle of the leaves in the summer wind, must be formed of the coarsest clods of clay, nor boast one spark of our immortal nature.

The glen was my favorite resort, and thither would I go and spend whole afternoons, listening to the laughing prattle of the little river, or striving to catch, in pauses of the breeze, the murmur of the neighboring sea. A rude bench had been constructed under some trees, in a partially open glade, at the lower extremity of the ravine, and here I usually sat, indulging in those dreamy, half-sick reveries which are characteristic of youth. The stream, which brawled down the ravine, in a succession of rapids and cascades, here glided smoothly along on a level bottom, its banks fringed with long grass interspersed with wild roses, and its bed strewn with pebbles, round and silvery, that glistened in the sunbeams, which, here and there, struggled through the trees, and shimmered on the stream. Faint and low came to the ear the sound of the mill, situated at the upper end of the ravine; while occasionally a bird whistled on the stillness, or a leaf floated lazily down into the river, and went on its way, a tiny bark. The seclusion of my favorite retreat was often enlivened by the appearance of strangers, but as they generally remained only a few moments, I had the spot for most of the time, to myself. Here I dreamed away the long summer afternoons, often lingering until the moon had risen, to make the scene seem even more beautiful, under her silvery light. I had no pleasure in any other spot. Perhaps it was because I had once been here with Annette, when we were both younger, and I, at least, happier; and I could remember plucking a flower for her from a time-worn bush that still grew on the margin of the stream. God knows how we love to haunt the spot made dear to us by old and tender recollections!

I was sitting, one afternoon, on the rude bench I have spoken of, listlessly casting pebbles into the river, when I heard the sound of approaching voices, but I was so accustomed to the visits of strangers, that I did not pause to look up. Directly the voices came nearer, and suddenly a word was spoken that thrilled through every nerve of my system. It was only a single word, but that voice! — surely it could be none other than Annette's. My sensations, at that moment, I will not pretend to analyze. I longed to look up, and yet I dared not. My heart fluttered wildly, and I could feel the blood rushing in torrents to my face; but, if I had been called on at that instant to speak, I could not have complied for worlds. Luckily the tree, under whose shadow I sat, concealed me from the approaching visitors, and I had thus time to rally my spirits ere the strangers came up. As they drew near I recognized the voice of Mr. St. Clair, and that of Annette's cousin Isabel, while there were one or two other speakers who were strangers to me. Doubtless one of them was Annette's husband, and, as this thought flashed across me, I looked up, impelled by an irresistible impulse. The party where now within almost twenty yards, coming gaily down the glen. Foremost in the group walked Isabel, leaning on the arm of a tall, gentlemanly looking individual, and turning ever and anon around to Annette, who followed immediately behind, at the side of her father. Another lady, attended by a gentleman, made up the rest of the company. Where could Annette's husband be? was the question that occurred to me — and who was that distinguished looking gentleman on whose arm Isabel was so familiarly leaning? But my thoughts were cut short by a conversation which now began, and of which, during a minute, I was an unknown auditor — for my position still concealed me from the party, and my surprise at first, and afterward delicacy, prevented me from appearing.

“Ah! Annette,” said Isabel, archly turning around to her cousin, “do you know this spot, but especially that rose-bush yonder! — here, right beyond that old tree — you seem wonderfully ignorant all at once! I wonder where the donor of that aforesaid rose-bud is now. I would lay a guinea that it is yet in your possession, preserved in some favorite book, pressed out between the leaves. Come, answer frankly, is it not so, my sweet coz?”

I could hear no reply, if one was made, and immediately another voice spoke. It was that of Isabel's companion, coming to the aid of Annette.

“You are too much given to believe that Annette follows your example, Isabel — now do you turn penitent, and let me be father-confessor — how many rose-buds, — ay! and for that matter, even leaves, have you in your collection, presented to you by your humble servant, before we had pity on each other, and were married? I found a flower, last week, in a copy of Spenser, and if I remember aright, I was the donor of the trifle.”

“Oh! you betray yourself,” gaily retorted Isabel; “but men are foolish — and of all foolish men I ever met with, a certain Albert

Marston was, before his marriage, the most foolish. I take credit to myself," she continued, in the same playful strain, "for having worked such a reformation in him since that event. But this is not what we were talking of — you wish to divert me from my purpose by this light Cossack warfare — but it won't 'do,'" she continued, and I fancied she stamped her foot prettily, as she was wont to do at Clairville Hall, when she was disposed to have her way; "no — no — Annette must be the one to turn penitent, and I will play father-confessor. Say, now, fair coz, was it not a certain fancy to see the same rose-bush, that induced you to insist on coming here?"

During this conversation the parties had remained near and stationary at some distance from me. Strange suspicions began to flash through my mind, as soon as Isabel commenced her banter; and these suspicions had now been changed into a certainty. Annette was still unmarried, and it was Isabel's wedding at which I had come so near being present, at Clairville Hall. Nor was this all. I was still loved. Oh! the wild, the rapturous feelings of that moment. I could with difficulty restrain myself from rising and rushing toward them; but motives of delicacy forbade me thus to reveal that the conversation had been overheard. And yet should I remain in my present position, and play the listener still further? I knew not what to do. All these considerations flashed through my mind in the space of less than a minute, during which the party had been silent, apparently enjoying Annette's confusion.

"Come, not ready to answer yet?" began Isabel; "well, if you will not, you shan't have the rose from that bush, for which you've come. Let us go back," she said playfully.

The whole party seemed to enter into the jest, and laughingly retraced their steps. This afforded me the opportunity for which I longed. Hastily rising from my seat, I glided unnoticed from tree to tree, until I reached a copse on the left of the glen, and advancing up the ravine, under cover of this screen, I re-entered the path at the bend some distance above the St Clairs. Here I listened for a moment, and caught the sound of their approaching voices. Determining no longer to be a listener to their conversation, I proceeded down the glen, and, as I turned the corner, a few paces in advance, I came full in sight of the approaching group. In an instant the gay laughing of the party ceased, and I saw Annette shrink blushing behind her father. Isabel was the first to speak. Darting forward, with that frankness and gayety which always characterized her, she grasped my hand, and said —

"You don't know how happy we all are to see you. Where could you have come from? — and how could you have made such a mistake as to congratulate Annette, instead of me, on being married? But come, I must surrender you to the others — I see they are dying to speak to you. Uncle, Annette — how lucky it was that we came here to-day!"

"My dear boy," said Mr. St. Clair, warmly pressing my hand, "I can not tell how rejoiced I am to see you. We heard a ru

mor that you were lost, and we all wept — Isabel for the first time for years. It was but a few days since, that we heard you were at Newport, and, as we were coming hither, I hastened my journey, determined to search you out. We are on our way there now, and only stopped here a few minutes to relieve ourselves after a long ride. This day shall be marked with a white stone. But here I have been keeping you from speaking to Annette — we old men, you know are apt to be garrulous.”

My eyes, indeed, had been seeking Annette, who, still covered with blushes, and unable to control her embarrassment, sought to conceal them by keeping in the background. As for me I had become wonderfully self-possessed. I now advanced and took her hand. It trembled in my own, and when I spoke, though she replied faintly, she did not dare to look into my face, except for a moment, after which her eyes again sought the ground in beautiful embarrassment. My unexpected appearance, combined with her cousin's late raillery covered her face with blushes, and for some time she could not rally herself sufficient to participate in the conversation.

What more have I to tell? I was now happy, — and for my misanthropy, it died with the cause that produced it. Mr. St. Clair said that the wedding need not be delayed, and in less than a month I led Annette to the altar. Years have flown since then, but I still enjoy unalloyed felicity, and Annette seems to my eyes more beautiful than ever. It only remains for me to bid my readers — FAREWELL.

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